

IN THESE TIMES

VOL. 9, NO. 23

MAY 8-14, 1985

\$1.25

NICARAGUA:

the
WAR
goes
on

pages 11-14

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega

Labor roundup

Rainbow Coalition: what now?

Pesticides in Paradise

California's gubernatorial politics

p2

p3

p5

p7

Forty years after

France's proportional elections

Zora Neale Hurston

Ted Turner and CBS

p8

p10

p18

p20

INSIDE LABOR

By David Moberg



Organized crime's labor

Everybody is fascinated by the mob. So when the President's Commission on Organized Crime began public hearings in April on labor and organized crime—complete with witnesses in ominous black hooded robes, guys with Italian names stumbling over Fifth Amendment claims that they would not answer questions “on the grounds that it might intend to incriminate me” and charts of crime families and “sacred territory” of gangsters—it was a sure bet that the press would show up.

Most of the testimony covered ground already revealed at least in part: past corruption in the Teamsters Central States Pension Fund; shakedowns in the New York construction industry; labor leasing schemes; racketeer involvement in the Long Island cartage industry; former gangster testimony of the prominent role in Chicago organized crime of the officers of Laborers Union Local 1. The charges made by the commission's staff focused on what they called the traditional big four—Teamsters, Laborers, east coast Longshoremens and Hotel and Restaurant Employees (the latter two to be dealt with later), as well as some small, independent unions.

The Commission acknowledged that organized crime at worst affected a small part of the labor movement, some 300 to 400 locals out of 50,000. But it argued that, as a result, organized crime managed to dominate some international unions and seriously harmed some of the most vulnerable workers in the labor force.

Labor attorneys David W. Elbaor and Laurence E. Gold argue that despite these small numbers the Department of Labor has radically shifted its emphasis from enforcement of labor law in civil cases to criminal enforcement since 1978. This increased effort has turned up few indictments, limited connection with organized crime and small-scale offenses that plausibly could be resolved in other ways, they argue. Although their critique is revealing and persuasive, it is worth noting that they are members of a firm whose chief partner, Robert Connerton, is general counsel for the Laborers, hardly a union free from taint. If Connerton did something to rid the Laborers of gangsters, the critique of the Labor Department would carry some weight.

What most struck me as I listened to the testimony was not the widespread presence of organized crime in the labor movement but rather how such gangsterism is a small part of the more pervasive problem of thwarted union democracy. Tendencies for union leaders to become entrenched, supported by a bureaucracy that stifles responsiveness to workers' needs, are reinforced by employers who share with them a common desire to get rid of “troublemakers” and who are often happy to buy “labor peace” with a payoff to union leaders. To the extent that the labor movement encourages a culture of business unionism instead of a socially and politically crusading unionism, such corruption, undemocratic practices and criminal involvement have a more fertile environment in which to thrive.

One hooded construction union informant named “Bravo,” for example, testified that although his union local had not been under mob control, he had often accepted bribes and payoffs at the initiative of employers, for whom it was “a way of life.” “By giving them labor peace, making sure there were no wildcat strikes, that was the quid pro quo,” he said.

Robert Rispo, who ran a labor leasing scheme that delivered truckers for below-contract rates to big companies like Coca-Cola and Continental Can, said, “The corporation is the biggest part of it. I would ask him why he goes along with this and I'll tell you what his answer is, ‘I save money.’ ...In order for it to work, everyone had to know. The corporation head could have put a stop to it.” When the Teamsters wanted to get rid of a “troublemaker,” Rispo fired him, to insure that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) would uphold the dismissal.

Robert E. Powell, a well-built black man who had worked his way up to vice president of the Laborers before he resigned, told how President Angelo Fosco told him, “Powell, you're dead, you're dead,” when he heard rumors Powell might run against him. With Fosco's reputation as tied to the Chicago mob and personal experience with threats and mysterious appearances of a dead rat and a dead pigeon in his car, Powell took Fosco's remarks very seriously.

As usual, the Teamsters provide a case study in the corruption engendered by lack of democracy. President Jackie Presser reluctantly appeared, taking the Fifth to all questions, including Rispo's allegation

that he had personally handed an envelope full of a cash payoff to Presser. Presser, who made \$755,474.29 last year in salary and expenses from four different posts, according to Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), is more than willing to use force to suppress any challenge to his position.

The leaked transcript of an Oct. 31, 1983, meeting of the Teamsters Joint Council 41 shows Presser obsessed with destroying TDU, the leading “troublemakers” for Presser and Teamsters employers since they fight for democracy, membership involvement and better contracts. He bragged to his top allies how he had threatened that an unnamed TDU member in a Teamster meeting would have “gotten killed” or got “his brains beat out” if Presser had identified him. Then he apparently almost choked up with emotion that some of his older associates had joined in a BLAST (Brotherhood of Loyal Americans and Strong Teamsters) assault on and disruption of a TDU convention in Michigan when “I could have imagined a lot of stronger and tougher guys going there.” He said he “was pleased to see that there are Teamsters that want to stop all that crap” and concluded, “We should be doing more of that. I'm going to tell you, I'm not going to let up on these people.”

He hasn't. Last December, 30-year-old Linda Gregg, a member of the TDU steering committee, ousted the incumbent secretary-treasurer of the 4,500-member Denver Teamster Local 435. Although the regional Teamster body upheld her election to the local's top office in January, despite protests by the defeated incumbent that his own election procedures were unfair, Presser and the union's international executive board overturned the election in mid-April. Recently in the Gary, Ind., local, the Teamsters business agent said anyone could run for the elected office of steward except TDU member Maralee Smith. Smith had won the post earlier, but was promptly removed by the business agent. Both are contemplating legal as well as political protests.

Maritimers and the law

A report by attorney Arthur Fox on the Labor Department's handling of the 1983 elections in the National Maritime Union (NMU) indicates how the government can compound problems of undemocratic union practices even while it chases La Cosa Nostra. Fox reports that the Labor Department staff consistently found serious violations of law by the officers of the NMU, one of the few labor friends of Reagan (they paid tribute to ex-Labor Secretary Ray Donovan the morning he was indicted).

For example, the election was conducted under eligibility rules that Labor had already called too restrictive. The 1980 NMU convention had even passed new, liberalized rules that were not followed. Furthermore, union members were not informed adequately of the forthcoming election, and insurgent candidates' literature was only poorly distributed at the last minute. Insurgents could not distribute their “slate cards” to many members, since nearly half the members worked on military bases that were off-limits to the challengers' workers. Challengers could not observe crucial stages of the election procedure and had difficulties getting on the bases, although they still discovered many instances of NMU officials herding every employee—without checking a membership list or asking for membership cards—through the polling room. Many of these voters were older black women who may not have been members or known anything about the election except for the incumbent slate cards they received, Fox reports.

There were ample grounds for suing to hold a new election—eligibility rules, inadequate communication with members, denial of challengers' right to observe and expenditure of union resources on behalf of the incumbents. Despite the evidence, and despite the advice of staff, Labor solicitor Francis Lilly refused to file a suit. Although he had to file a Statement of Reasons, Fox said most of the issues were ignored or dealt with inadequately in it. What was the real reason?

It turns out the NMU had retained T. Timothy Ryan Jr. as its attorney in the case. Ryan had been Lilly's boss and predecessor until he left the job shortly before the NMU elections, which he had been monitoring. “When he was initially faced with an overpowering recommendation by his staff,” Fox wrote, “Lilly felt he had no option but to go along with it. Although the Union's attorneys had initially refused to grant the department an extension of the deadline for filing suit, hoping that it could force the department to close the investigation without suing, they suddenly reversed themselves. Obviously, Mr. Lilly let it be known to his former boss that if he were going to be able to ‘help out’ he needed more time to find a way to do it.” The union then granted an extension.

Maybe another presidential commission could investigate?

Union stays at Danly

When the nine-month strike by Steelworkers Local 15271 against Danly Machine Corporation ended (*In These Times*, March 20), nearly 440 workers—new-hires or former employees—had crossed the union picket line. That was bad enough, weakening the union and forcing an unwelcome settlement. But the prospects looked even worse, since one strikebreaker—a man accused by the union of illegally selling government surplus food while he was on strike—had filed a petition for decertification.

Union workers complained that he was receiving company encouragement, such as free access to all parts of the plant and no apparent work assignment while he organized against the union. By the time of the election on April 14, union loyalists were still a distinct minority within the plant and the anti-union faction was challenging the eligibility of strike supporters who were still on layoff, especially if they had temporary jobs elsewhere.

Yet many of those who crossed the picketline obviously decided that they wanted a union, nonetheless. When the ballots were counted on April 26, 333 workers voted yes to the union, 277 voted no and

Continued on page 6

IN
THESE
TIMES

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The Independent
Socialist Newspaper

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657, (312) 472-5700

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(ISSN 0160-5992)

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Rainbow Coalition seeking ways to carry on the fight

By Salim Muwakkil

ON PAPER, JESSE JACKSON'S Rainbow Coalition (RC) adds up to a dream come true. The creation of an organized group of society's outsiders dedicated to challenging the political status quo is a vision shared by political utopians everywhere. And since, as Jackson notes, "America rejects and excludes more people than it accepts and includes," the coalition is as pragmatic as it is utopian. Jackson urges this "real silent majority" to join with him to pursue its political interests and transform the politics of the U.S.

Despite these advertised advantages, the rainbow has failed to attract much support outside the black community. And although Jackson's political campaign operated under the auspices of the RC, his success as a presidential candidate was due more to racial than rainbow politics. Many of his supporters blame white people's reluctance to follow black leadership as the major reason for the rainbow's monochromatic nature.

"The Free South Africa Movement and the recent 'April Actions' (*In These Times*, May 1) demonstrate that many white progressives are just now learning how to follow the lead of black people," notes Jack O'Dell, a spokesman for the RC. "They have to force themselves out of habitual ways of thinking. It's an extremely healthy development and just look at how successful those two campaigns have been."

Danu Smith, the national coordinator of the April Actions coalition agrees with O'Dell. "The predominantly white peace movement has taken a long time to understand the inextricable link between the issues of justice and peace. This [April] action represents a maturation of the white peace activists."

But the RC's problems are not based solely on whites' inability to accept black leadership. Stunted at its very inception by Jackson's "Hymie-Hymietown" gaffe and his subsequent refusal to repudiate Nation of Islam boss Louis Farrakhan (two actions that drastically devalued Jackson's most valuable asset: moral currency), the RC has consistently been on the defensive.

Jackson's people were never able to satisfactorily answer this question: how can a group based on opposition to racism and discrimination accommodate a philosophy (Farrakhan's Black Muslim beliefs) that is just a flip side of apartheid? The question has lost some of its insistence because Jackson, belatedly realizing the problems caused by Farrakhan's immutably racist doctrine, has distanced himself from the Nation of Islam. For his part, Farrakhan has also pulled away from his enthusiastic support of Jackson. "I don't think he [Jackson] can count on our support in the future," he said in a recent interview.

There was also the question of whether the RC was to be an excuse for just another Jackson-led civil rights group or was it to be a serious, nuts-and-bolts political organization. Critics say that confusion remains and is a major hindrance to the coalition's progress. Sources familiar with the coalition say some of Jackson's closest advisers are counseling him to desert the rain-

bow and return to Operation PUSH. Thomas Todd, one of Jackson's earliest and most influential supporters, recently urged the mercurial reverend to leave the exigencies of politics to exigent politicians.

Overcoming political isolation.

"By getting involved in the politics of things, Jesse loses his moral authority," explains a well-known Jackson supporter who wishes to remain anonymous. "Now, whenever he makes a comment on something, anything, his remarks will be interpreted and examined for their possible political intent rather than for content. Jesse is undermining his own credibility by choosing to do battle in the political arena."

O'Dell disagrees. He sees the RC as the electoral arm of the civil rights movement—an appendage that he contends is badly needed. "We have to overcome the political isolation of the kind of people who organize mass demonstrations," O'Dell argues. "We have to show them that it does matter who is president, or who is secretary of state. If we abdicate the field, we will simply leave it to our adversaries."

"Eventually, the Rainbow Coalition will be set up as an institutionalized political movement, representing a clear alternative to the one-party system with two names,"

"I find that if people are really sincere they'll eventually understand that the rainbow and Rev. Jackson is no threat," O'Dell says. "For example, Jesse just came back from addressing more than 4,000 farmers in Minnesota; they invited him. They did this because they are beginning to see the connections between their issues and issues that Jesse is addressing."

But Jackson wasn't only in Minnesota; he's addressed large farmers rallies in Missouri and Kansas. In the last few weeks, he's been in New York City for anti-apartheid protests, in high school auditoriums across the country spreading his old PUSH-EXCEL program's message of putting "hope in your brains instead of dope in your veins," in Chicago lecturing Mayor Harold Washington about doing business with firms hiding South African connections, and he traveled to West Germany as Reagan's personal gadfly. He's mixing agendas with a frenzy; civil rights leader, religious-moral taskmaster, political candidate, movement icon—the peripatetic Jackson is living up to one of his earliest nicknames, the "grasshopper."

From Bitburg to Johannesburg.

If Jesse weren't doing these things, who would be doing them? asks RC strategist

strengthen them during this time of crisis for both groups."

In the late 1800s coalitions between blacks and militant agrarian groups like the Greenbackers, the Readjusters and Thomas Watson's Populist movement were formed. These alliances proved extremely vulnerable to racist exploitation, however, and consequently were short-lived. There has been no serious attempt to resurrect those coalitions and many Jackson supporters tout his attempt to link up agrarian whites with urban blacks as one of the RC's most promising strategies.

At a recent meeting at Operation PUSH headquarters in Chicago (a podium from which he speaks often), Jackson explained the specifics of his invitation to West Germany—a visit that was planned months ago that happened to coincide with Reagan's trip. He blasted Reagan's decision to visit the Bitburg cemetery, but noted he was not surprised by the president's action.

"There's a thread common to much of what Reagan does," Jackson said. "Of course, it would be more appropriate for Reagan to argue human rights in Johannesburg, South Africa, than laying a wreath at the Bitburg cemetery."

He billed the graveside commemoration as "a reunion of fascism which is a source of deep embarrassment and pain. But let's not forget that this is the same Reagan who opened up his presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Miss., the same town where three interracial civil rights activists were slain in 1964. There is a straight line from Philadelphia to Johannesburg to Bitburg—a line of insensitivity."

Jackson's visibility has certainly been



O'Dell explains. "We ran a candidate for president last year to offer a choice between Mondale's program of economic sanctions against Nicaragua and Reagan's 'constructive engagement' policies in South Africa. By offering a choice and forcefully making our case, we won 60 congressional districts and two states. We pointed out a way for Democrats to win, but they rejected it. We all saw what happened to the Democratic Party for trying to out-Reagan Reagan. Still, if you examine their actions to this day, it's clear that party officials have yet to get the message."

O'Dell says the RC accomplished its electoral success without the active participation of those who were turned off by the negative publicity surrounding Jackson's alleged anti-Semitism and those who dismiss his leadership for ad hominem reasons. He believes that those who initially rejected Jackson will again seek his leadership once they realize that he isn't a bigoted anti-Semite as depicted in much of the press.

Robert Starks. "Instead of criticizing him for issue-hopping, I'd rather congratulate him for having the energy, time and facility to address our serious problems. Who else is pointing out that Reagan's insensitivity to Holocaust victims is consistent with his insensitivity to victims of apartheid? The fact that he wouldn't 'back down' from commemorating SS troops in Bitburg is an indication of his buckaroo, 'high noon' mentality, and if Jesse were not pointing these things out, they would remain unsaid. Who else is forging links between rural farmers and urban blacks. The connections between these two disparate constituencies have been submerged since the 1890s, and Jesse deserves a hell of a lot of credit for unearthing those links and trying to

Jesse Jackson joins others during recent April demonstrations.

enhanced by his run for the presidency, and some say that's all he ever wanted. But his ideas still make sense, and he articulates them well. His analyses are head and shoulders above the usual pabulum mouthed by so-called responsible politicians. If the Rainbow Coalition does nothing more than allow him a national platform to address a badly misinformed public, it is already performing a useful function.

INSHORT

Beth Maschinot

Demos of the week

Students at the University of Wisconsin at Madison demonstrated against apartheid in front of the UW library April 23 and then headed for bigger game: the capitol building up the street. Twelve hundred protesters marched onto the capitol grounds, hundreds barricading themselves into Gov. Anthony Earl's second-floor office. By the end of the day the protesters had moved downstairs, pitching their sleeping bags on the capitol rotunda floor. Earl has promised that there would be no action by the police if the protesters stay out of his office.

The state of Wisconsin has \$2.88 billion in pension funds invested in South Africa, according to State Rep. Marcia Coggs. Last month a vote on a bill calling for divestment was delayed in the Wisconsin assembly. The vote is now expected in the fall, with a divestment board to be appointed by Gov. Earl in the meantime. The protesters—hundreds sleeping in the rotunda each night—have demanded that Earl appoint two divestment sympathizers from their ranks to the board.

As protests at Cornell University continue, the mass arrests—at last count the number had tipped 2,000—have abated in the last few days. Cortland State University professor William Griffen, a Cornell alumnus, decided to use a hard-won symbol to register his disgust with apartheid: he handed over his 1967 doctoral diploma to the Cornell dean of students as 200 students and faculty cheered him on. Griffen told Dean David Drinkwater: "I would never belong to an organization that knowingly supported racist policies and so I cannot in good conscience retain my membership as a Cornell alumnus. The professor hopes the idea will catch on, telling *In These Times*: "It was time to send a reminder to my fellow alumni."

Bankrupt claims

The corporate campaign pitting the meatpackers of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local P-9 against the George A. Hormel Co. heated up considerably at an April 24 annual stockholders meeting at First Bank Systems in St. Paul. The Austin, Minn., meatpackers, working under wage cuts from \$10.69 an hour to \$8.25 had enlisted the help of the controversial and innovative Ray Rodgers of Corporate Campaign last October to put pressure on First Bank, the major bank where Hormel does business (see *In These Times*, Dec. 19, 1984). While Rodgers and local president Jim Guyette told First Bank officials that the bank had enough clout with Hormel to force the company to reinstate the higher wages, First Bank Chairman George Dixon and Hormel President Dewalt Ankeny were equally unyielding. Both denied that First Bank had influence over Hormel's decision-making, and Dixon assured the stockholders that the bank would not "involve itself in an internal labor-management dispute."

The combative Rodgers says that First Bank is "lying when they say they are not involved with Hormel and can't make policy for them." Though First Bank says it owns and has proxy power over 16 percent of Hormel stock, Rodgers claims its involvement is deeper than that. Three First Bank directors sit on the Hormel board and through credit leverage the bank can dictate policy to Hormel officials. Rodgers also claims that First Bank has significant influence over the 47 percent of Hormel shares controlled by the Hormel Foundation.

During the inflammatory meeting, Rodgers told the bank officers that his campaign is already responsible for \$70 million in withdrawals from First Bank and that he could muster the removal of up to a half billion dollars more in union pensions, accounts and supporters' accounts. Later Ankeny said that the bank could withstand the impact of any amount of withdrawals instigated by the meatpackers' campaign. He added that the bank was monitoring the meatpackers to determine if any illegal secondary boycott was taking place. Rodgers, though, was not intimidated: he called the thought of being guilty of a secondary boycott "ridiculous" because "people have a right to handle their money as they see fit."

Pass the pork

Former arms control negotiator Paul Warnke thinks the Star Wars program is fast becoming a "great pork barrel in the sky." And the Center for Economic Priorities—an



The National Treasury Employees Union is calling on all federal employees to join their boycott of W.R. Grace and Company. In the Grace Commission Report, J. Peter Grace cited federal employees' pay as the source of much government waste, and called on the government to cut pay and restructure pensions for federal workers. The NTEU—representing more than 70,000 workers at the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Communications Commission and other government agencies—has picketed a handful of Grace subsidiaries in eight major cities, including last week's picket of Hermann's Sporting Goods in Chicago (above). Other firms owned by Grace include Houlthorn's Old Place, Coco's and La Fiesta restaurants, J.A. Robinson's Jewelers, Handy City hardware stores and the Grace Trucking Service.

Greece's parliamentary elections have been moved up from June 16 to June 2. Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu cited two reasons for the early elections: to complete the amendment of the Greek constitution as quickly as possible and to give the government the support of a popular mandate in further dealings with Turkey over Cyprus (see *In These Times*, April 24). According to the Athens News Agency, Papandreu expects his PASOK party will draw at least 48 percent of the votes.

French anti-militarism has hit rock bottom, says a recent survey in *Le Point*, a popular French weekly.

Seventy-two percent of French youth think that France could not properly defend itself without nuclear arms. While 42 percent would prefer a choice between the military and civilian service, almost all said they felt that the present compulsory military service allows participants to "learn practical skills" and acquire technical training. And the pacifism so evident in other European countries is frowned upon in France: half of the respondents said that pacifists are "idealists cut off from reality" and another 19 percent said they are "naive pawns of Moscow."

While President Reagan tightens the screws on Nicaragua, in mid-

April the Abraham Lincoln Brigade gave a \$100,000 check to the Nicaraguan ambassador in Washington for ambulances and medical supplies for the people of Nicaragua. Nicaragua plans to buy seven ambulances with the money, the first to be named after Edward Barsky, an American surgeon in the Spanish Civil War.

"Nicaragua stands in the way of peace and progress. It is the odd man out in Central American policy," so said Langhorne Motley two weeks before stepping down as assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs. *Et tu, Langhorne?*

independent research group that Warnke is affiliated with—released a study last week that puts the meat on Warnke's claim. According to the CEP, 77 percent of the prime space weapons contracts awarded in fiscal years '83 and '84 were given to states or districts represented by Congress members who sit on the Armed Services Committees and the Appropriations Defense subcommittees—four committees with key roles in Star Wars decision-making. Members from these four committees had received an average of \$34 million in strategic defense contracts—six times the amount awarded to districts of non-members.

The report also said that the seeds for entrenched political support for Star Wars are being sown in other ways on Capitol Hill. The nation's top 10 defense contractors have been awarded 87 percent of the strategic defense awards. Since Star Wars is projected to be the fastest growing Department of Defense Research and Development program—jumping from 3.7 percent in 1984 to 13.1 percent in 1990—the top firms will become increasingly dependent on Star Wars to keep their profit margins high.

The stage is already set, says the CEP, for the economic benefits to key contractors and a few geographical constituencies to overshadow any real discussion of "national security." In fact, the one brake on the "institutionalization of Star Wars—the "independent panel" appointed by President Reagan to assess the technical feasibility of the program—is filled with industrialists from major defense contractors, including the chairperson, who's the president of a major weapons firm, R&D Associates.

Where do we go from here? CEP has a list of recommendations, starting with a call to the Defense Department to steer clear of developing prototype systems until more basic technological research on how Star Wars will affect the ABM treaty have been completed. The research organization also recommends a freeze or reduction of Star Wars '86 budget. Failing this, CEP advises Congress to cut the proposed '86 budget from \$3.7 billion to \$1.6 billion. The group also

suggests that Congress listen to a truly "independent" review board, made up of military science, technology and strategy experts and minus the contractors with their conflict of interests.

Building the empire

Cordoba, Spain, has long been a symbol of empire, from the days when the Romans made it the capital of the Iberian peninsula to its once-held designation as the most important Islamic city in the Western world. Mayors and councillors from 99 cities from 10 countries and five continents gathered in Cordoba the last week in March to build a new sort of empire. The Second International Conference of Nuclear Free Zones discussed strategies to put teeth into the declarations of 1,666 cities and towns worldwide that have declared themselves nuclear-free zones.

Spain leads the way with 323 declared cities (compared to 80 in the U.S.). A resolution was passed urging that country's Socialist President Felipe Gonzalez to keep his campaign promise to hold a public referendum on Spain's membership in NATO. But the mayors also said that no matter what Spain's status with NATO, they still expected a nuclear-free Spain. Addressing the perplexing question of enforcement, the mayor of Arganda del Rey, a town of 22,000 near Madrid, told how he followed up on his town's vote against nuclear arms by ordering the town's police to stop and send back trucks carrying nuclear materials. Most of the other municipal leaders conceded that they had not yet taken such a concrete step.

The conference chose June 1, 1986, as International Nuclear-Free Zone Day and called on participants to develop national peace resource centers in their respective countries to inform the public of the possibility and strategies for peace.

This week's contributors: John Nord, Jonathan Riskind and Joseph Skimmer

By Samuel Fromartz
and Francis Wilkinson

THINK OF HAWAII: PRISTINE SAND beaches, papaya, guava and mango trees, rows of sugar cane and pineapple stretching across the countryside. Tropical rain forests, volcanoes, bamboo groves, waterfalls—all of it expressed by the Hawaiian word *aina*, the land. It's the sun-drenched paradise vacationers find even on the hotel-studded beaches of Waikiki.

But the *aina* is being threatened these days. Pesticides, used on the islands since the end of World War II, have seeped into the groundwater, milk and lives of Hawaiians. "Hawaii's a dumping ground," said Sandra Marquardt of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides.

Roughly 26 different chemicals are used to grow one pineapple, and that's where the problem begins. Consider the pesticide contributions of the sugar cane industry, tropical fruit, flower and vegetable farms in a climate ideal for pests and the figures are not hard to understand. Hawaii uses 10 times more pesticides per square mile than any other state. And the state government has allowed, even lobbied for, the continued use of the chemicals. Said Marquardt: They've been "abysmally short-sighted."

The most serious and long-ranging problem now confronting Hawaii is the contamination of their water supply. Twenty of 100 water wells on Oahu contain pesticides. Wells and streams are also contaminated on the islands of Maui and Kauai.

In 1982 there was the "Great Oahu Milk Crisis" (see *In These Times*, July 14, 1982). First milk, then half-and-half, ice cream, yogurt and finally cottage cheese were taken off the grocery shelf when the dairy products were found to contain traces of heptachlor, a carcinogenic pesticide. The source: "green-chop," a leafy part of the pineapple plant fed to dairy cows. Later heptachlor was discovered in mothers' breast milk. Children born during this period were dubbed "heptachlor babies."

In this controversial climate, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently proposed a "tri-fly" eradication program to rid the islands of three types of fruit-fly, the most common of which is the Mediterranean fruit-fly. Among the proposed methods was to aerially spray the islands with some 2.9 million pounds of malathion, the equivalent of nearly three pounds for every Hawaiian. The chemical causes cancer in laboratory animals and removes paint from cars.

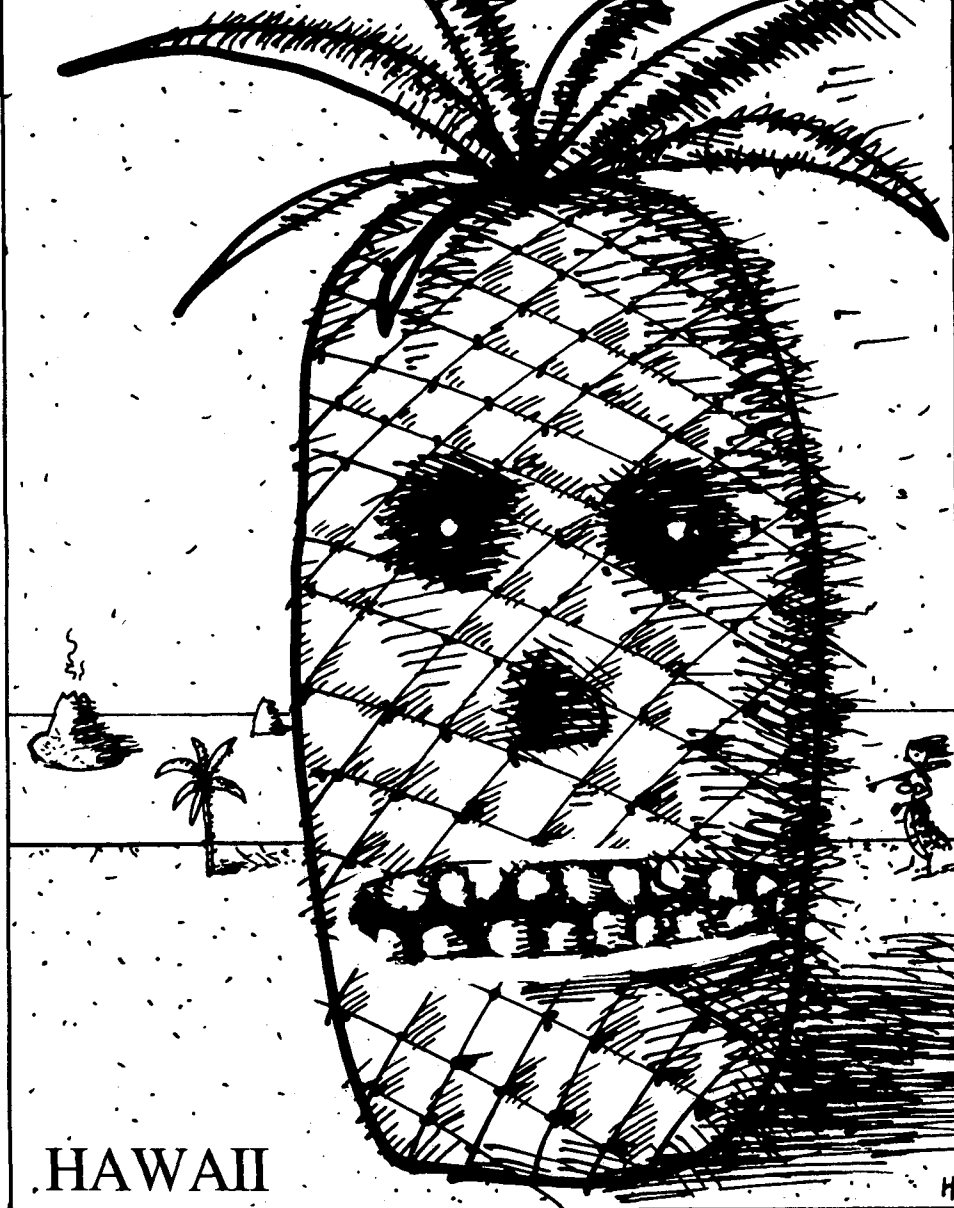
California agricultural interests have lobbied hard for the proposal. They claim that the source of their fruit-fly infestation is the Hawaiian islands. Malathion is the favored method of eradication. The alternative, Rex Magee of California's Department of Food and Agriculture told the *Los Angeles Times*, "is to isolate Hawaii."

Third World vassal.

Comments like Magee's do little to dispel the notion held by many Hawaiians that the U.S. regards the islands much like a Third World vassal, subject to the imperial whims on the mainland. The USDA's draft proposal for malathion spraying would probably still be unknown to most Hawaiians had it not been much publicized in the wake of the *Honolulu Bulletin's* shocking series on the heptachlor cover-up. On Oahu, however, it had been virtually unknown except to a small group of agricultural specialists. As for Kauai, the site of the first proposed spraying, no public meeting was ever held and residents remained largely unaware of the plan until the heptachlor stories expanded the statewide debate on pesticide abuse.

State officials eager to appear tough on the pesticide issue after the damning newspaper accounts of high-level incompetence and complicity have universally denounced the malathion proposals. "It's politically acceptable to take shots at the USDA," said Hazel Cunningham, an aide to state Sen. Ann Kobayashi. But it is clear that the state has done much to promote pesticides in the past.

IN THE NATION



Pesticides: the other side of paradise

In a court suit filed over the milk crisis it was disclosed that the Hawaiian Department of Agriculture not only knew about the milk contamination as early as 1975 but tried to keep it quiet. Alexander Dollar, a former state agriculture official, said at the time: "Nobody has a problem. It's internal. But the minute it goes official, then you've got a problem."

The state had invested \$360,000 in a cattle feed cooperative to harvest pineapple green-chop. They didn't want the industry to fold. But Dow Chemical, a pesticide manufacturer, became wary of future law suits and Del Monte told Dollar that if green-chop "became too big a hassle, we'd get out."

Dollar told them: "We don't want that to happen."

Milk cows continued to be fed the contaminated feed for another eight years.

Economic considerations also motivated the state to seek an exemption of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ban on heptachlor in 1977, and the agency's ban on DBCP that took effect in 1979. The state thought it could save jobs in the pineapple industry, state Sen. Clayton Hee told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. But even with the exemptions, "the pineapple companies took their business to Taiwan and the Philippines."

DBCP (dibromochloropropane) has since been found in Oahu's water supply. So has EDB (ethylene dibromide) and TCP (trichloropropane). EDB is the most toxic of the three; the EPA recommends that no level is safe in water. DBCP is a carcinogen and mutagen and has been associated with low sperm counts among workers who use it. A ban on TCP was proposed in November 1984 and is still being reviewed by the EPA. It causes birth defects and cancer in laboratory animals.

DBCP was first detected in 1980 in the small Del Monte "company town" of Kunia, Oahu. After a spill of 600-800 gal-

lons of EDB, inspectors looked into the town's water wells. They were surprised to find DBCP at very high levels. While Del Monte did not use the chemical, it was traced to years of mixing and loading the chemical on a platform in the town. The wells were immediately closed.

In the summer of 1983, DBCP and TCP were detected in Mililani, a wealthy suburb outside of Honolulu, built on former pineapple farms. Wells were closed, water trucked in and new lines to uncontaminated mountain wells constructed.

While Oahu farmers voluntarily stopped using DBCP in 1977, it's still used on Maui where pesticide applications are considered on a field-by-field basis. And while heptachlor was banned on the islands in 1982—fully five years after the nationwide ban—farmers were allowed to use up existing stocks of the chemical, and may still be using it. EDB and DBCP have since been discovered in agricultural wells and streams on Maui and Kauai.

Allegations on pesticide abuse go deeper

The most serious, long-ranging problem in Hawaii is contamination of the water supply. Twenty of 100 water wells on Oahu contain pesticides.

IN THESE TIMES MAY 8-14, 1985 5
still. This past February, Hector Matsuda, a supervisor of the Hawaiian Department of Agriculture's pesticide monitoring program on Oahu, told a surprised state senate committee that "every farmer has misused pesticides on crops." He also charged that his superiors discourage him from citing violators.

"I was told by my supervisors to forget it. They weren't going to kill the golden goose that lays the golden egg. Our job was to promote agriculture, not demote it," said Matsuda.

He described farmers applying pesticides from a knapsack, "the way they did in the '20s and '30s." He also charged that certifications for pesticide use were granted to farmers who couldn't even read the instructions on pesticide containers.

He told of workers' eyes tearing up at the end of the day, of others with kidney ailments and enlarged livers. "I'm scared, medically speaking, and I don't know what's going to happen," Matsuda said.

Pineapple workers exposed to DBCP on the islands of Molokai and Oahu have been found to have depressed sperm counts and abnormally shaped sperm, according to studies done in 1977 and 1980. High levels of birth defects were also detected on the island of Lanai, which is solely inhabited by pineapple workers. Of the 83 babies born on the island between 1976 and 1983, 11 had birth defects—a rate of 131 per 1,000, 13 times higher than the state average. And in a 1982 medical study of the milk incident, University of Hawaii researchers found a correlation between mothers' breast milk contaminated with heptachlor and abnormal birth weights and head circumference, increased levels of jaundice, premature births and longer hospital stays.

The EPA announced in February that it will study the effects of heptachlor contamination—almost 35 months after the incident occurred. As for water contamination, "there are suggestions of studies, but nothing is firm," said Stewart Cohen of the EPA.

While bills addressing pesticide contamination have recently been presented to the state legislature, they have yet to become law. "They are being dealt with as political issues, not health issues with political overtones," said Hazel Cunningham.

Nothing definitive has happened with the USDA's malathion proposal. The period for public comment on the draft environmental impact statement expired on March 26, after three months of public discussion. Biologists testified about the effect of malathion on Hawaii's endangered species, citizens spoke of their health fears and even a Nobel laureate poet, W.S. Merwin, a part-time resident of Maui, raised objections to the proposal. The papaya industry, the only group to directly benefit from the eradication of fruit-flies, has said it supports the proposal, "but not at the expense of the general public and the environment." The final decision is up to Congress, for federal funds must be voted for the USDA program.

"What we have here is unlike anything in the world. Spraying would practically ruin the native environment," University of Hawaii geneticist Hampton L. Carson told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*.

Edward Stubbs of the USDA's Plant Health Inspection Service believes that Hawaiians have "misunderstood malathion," despite the fact that they are a "highly educated population." Having been given the task of eliminating fruit-flies, Stubbs views the malathion proposal as a pragmatic means to that end, although he admits to no fondness for the chemical and, indeed, said he understands the islanders' fears. He hopes that "future technologies" will soon be feasible—the introduction of sterile male fruit-flies, for example—to provide less hazardous methods of pest eradication. Until then, however, he will continue to advocate his "integrated pest management philosophy"—that is, the use of malathion in conjunction with other chemicals to wipe out Hawaii's pests. The USDA plan, he added, will "eventually win the people over."

Samuel Fromartz and Francis Wilkinson are New York-based journalists.

Steel

Continued from page 2

148 challenged ballots were virtually all pro-union. It was a rare and welcome result after a successful management strikebreaking effort. Romano and the strike loyalists worked hard to suppress their own resentment and organize the strikebreakers, especially the new-hires. "We're still here," local president Joe Romano said with relief, even though he faces the difficult task of rebuilding the union.

First-hand report on Central America

The second first-hand report on labor union conditions in Central America from the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador offers a bleak view of El Salvador and a call for an end to U.S. hostile actions—military or economic—against Nicaragua (see *In These Times*, April 3). Leaders of 23 major unions endorsed its nine-member visiting team's report, which is now available for \$1 from the Committee at 15 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003.

"The sober truth is that in El Salvador, the everyday activities of trade unionists in the U.S....are activities that place the lives

of Salvadoran unionists in peril," the delegation reported. The collapse of the economy from war pressures has brought a new urgency to organizing, but land reform bogged down, the justice system crippled by right-wing interference, the countryside terrorized by a U.S.-financed air war and the army, controlled by the right, remains the real domestic power, the union visitors concluded. Even a retired Salvadoran army colonel told them that the U.S. dictated political decisions and does not want a Contadora-style peace treaty.

While there has been harassment of some opposition unions in Nicaragua, the delegation reported, "it seems to us inappropriate to compare the situation of unions in Nicaragua with those in the Soviet bloc. The opposition unions have offices, meetings, publications, training workshops and funding. They are active members of the political opposition." Yet they also report that the opposition union figures said they did not want U.S. aid to the *contras*, and concluded that many restrictions on unions were war-related, citing Nicaraguan comparisons of the 1982-84 suspension of strikes to the no-strike pledge of U.S. unions during World War II.

"The fundamental fact of life in Nicaragua, as in the rest of Central America, is poverty, not Communism," the report states. It characterizes the *contras* as lacking a base of popular support and as terrorizing civilian life rather than attacking military targets. In Nicaragua, as in El Salvador, the union group concludes, U.S.

policy is "an unwise, self-fulfilling prophecy of Cold War fears" that counters professed American ambitions.

U.S. labor lawyers visit Nicaragua

A group of U.S. labor lawyers, whose visit was initiated by the National Lawyers Guild, visited Nicaragua in December. Its report (available from Robert Gibbs, 1613 Smith Tower, Seattle, WA 98104) is much more directly critical of the AFL-CIO. It strongly attacks the report by William Doherty of the federation-affiliated American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) that laid the groundwork for an AFL-CIO resolution critical of Nicaragua.

"Are Nicaragua's Trade Unions Free?" depicts the main opposition unions as two tiny organizations with links not only to their U.S. backers but to the Somoza regime. Some of the unions' members and leaders have been arrested for sabotage and support of the *contras*, not for their union activity. Although the report acknowledges some short-term arrests of unionists in 1982, which were also criticized by Americas Watch and the International Labor Organization (ILO), it disputes point by point most of the serious attacks made in Doherty's report.

In some cases, the lawyers provide alternative, less ominous interpretations of events based on Labor Ministry accounts,

which may be criticized as self-serving but often are quite plausible. For example, the Ministry described what Doherty called occupation of a union office by Sandinista troops as a brief occupation by demonstrators who were not dispelled quickly enough by police.

But in other cases, even the supposedly victimized unionists contradicted the Doherty report. And in many instances, no documentation or contradictory documentation was offered by the opposition.

"Our investigation of the AIFLD report revealed significant disputes with regard to virtually every allegation of trade union repression in Nicaragua," the nine lawyers concluded. "The AFL-CIO's accusations were directly contradicted by CTN and CUS (an anti-Sandinista union) leaders with whom we met, reports of respected international human rights groups and documentary evidence provided to the delegation by the labor Ministry.... Moreover, many of the allegations contained in the AIFLD report were dismissed by [an] ILO report based on a detailed investigation.... The CTN admitted to the ILO that no less than 17 CTN member, which it claimed were arrested for their union activities were in fact arrested for engaging in illegal activities on behalf of the *contras*, such as economic sabotage."

Besides the large Sandinista union—the main source of the ten-fold growth in union membership since Somoza was overthrown—several other independent unions are generally sympathetic to the government. The report argued that the Sandinista unions, rather than resembling Soviet unions' relationship to the Communist Party, have relations with the Sandinistas much like the AFL-CIO's relation with the Democratic Party—an analogy that probably won't make anybody happy. For example, the Sandinista urban and peasant unions both opposed the suspension of the right to strike.

Although the AFL-CIO had no official position on aid to the *contras*, Central American lobbyists in Washington report that Doherty is frequently linked with various *contras*, such as Eden Pastora. In a March 18 interview with reporters, AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland argued against such aid, although his explanation may not offer other opponents much comfort.

"If I had been asked, which I was not, at the time that the question of the *contras* was under consideration by this administration, I would have counselled against any such adventure," Kirkland said. "And it's not because I hold any brief for the government of Nicaragua. I don't. I think it's an oppressive regime. I think it's the source now, and will be even more so in the future, of a great many problems in Central America. I think there is a serious problem of Soviet/Cuban involvement that's going to plague us for a long time. And I also believe that if a regime or an alliance of that kind is in the business of spreading fleas throughout an area, it's not unseemly that they should be made to scratch themselves with a dose of their own medicine."

"No, I would have argued against it because we have a long history of leading people, various groups, up the hill and abandoning them," Kirkland continued. "With the Montagnards, with the Kurds, UNITA in Angola, the Tibetans...and the world is littered with the debris of that kind which we have abandoned. And I foresee the same thing happening in Nicaragua. I don't think we should make commitments which we are ill-equipped psychologically and politically and otherwise to pursue."

If the U.S. faces a security threat there, it shouldn't contract out defense, he said. Also, "those who argue that the civil war in El Salvador should be resolved by negotiations leading to the full participation of the rebel forces in the country should accept the logic that the same principle applies in Nicaragua."

The National Labor Committee report, not to mention other sources, casts doubt on the parallel legitimacy of those rebel forces. "President Reagan seems to stand alone in his support of these so-called freedom fighters," they wrote. ■

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By Joan Walsh

LOS ANGELES

MAYOR TOM BRADLEY'S 2-1 re-election here last month was the laconic politician's best possible rejoinder to California Democrats who are urging him not to seek a rematch of his 1982 race with Gov. George Deukmejian next fall.

Bradley used the mayoral race aggressively, unleashing a formidable political arsenal to build up the largest possible margin against his challenger, City Council member John Ferraro, even after polls showed the 66-year-old black mayor a clear winner in the contest. The impressive performance won compliments even from the discouraging Bradley's statewide political hopes. Said Los Angeles Congressman Henry Waxman, a prime mover behind the gubernatorial explorations of Santa Barbara state Sen. Gary Hart (that's his real name), "Bradley has put himself back on top of the list of strong Democratic officeholders."

That was the day after the election. Now Bradley's grace period is starting to expire and the chorus of skepticism is rising again. Some state Democratic leaders are just this side of panic over the prospects of a party ticket headed by Bradley, a one-time loser, and Sen. Alan Cranston, who both parties see looks vulnerable this time around. Add the confirmation election of liberal Supreme Court Chief Justice Rose Bird and the other Jerry Brown-appointed justices targeted by conservatives for defeat, and some worry that a Republican stampede to the polls could trample Democrats from the U.S. Senate to the State Assembly. "Mercy, we need novenas," House Speaker Willie Brown told reporters recently.

Is the doubters' lobby getting through to Bradley? He continues to maintain he has no "plans" to run for governor, but he's been saying that over the roar of his revved-up political engines since after the 1982 election. Bradley is known to want to make the race again, and so do his closest advisors, who don't share the prevailing fatalism about a Bradley-Deukmejian rematch. It took two tries, they point out, for Bradley to beat Sam Yorty and become mayor.

His resounding mayoral mandate, of course, might also be a nice way to wind up a political career, especially since Deukmejian looks almost invulnerable right now. And so the common wisdom is that Bradley remains genuinely undecided about his plans. But around him, supporters and staff are continuing to lay the groundwork for a 1986 campaign, and the smart money is counting him in the race, no matter who else seeks the Democratic nomination.

The new Bradley.

Whatever the cause, the years since his defeat by Deukmejian have seen a changed Tom Bradley. Moderation has long been his trademark, even in an era when confrontation carried the day in black politics. Supporters labeled the police lieutenant-turned-attorney competent and in control; detractors called him bland and compromised. His own slogan from the 1982 primary summed it up: "Tom Bradley. He doesn't make a lot of noise. He just gets things done."

But his 50,000-vote loss to Deukmejian seemed to show that even the least threatening black politician would suffer from the racism of the statewide electorate. A Deukmejian's campaign strategist drew fire for suggesting his candidate would do better than polls said because of secret racism, but election day proved him right. And Bradley's low-keyed approach seemed to hurt him with blacks. Unusually low turnout in black areas of his own city may have cost him the election, though the small margin meant that virtually every campaign error or misfortune could take the blame.

Since then, Bradley has been a noticeably more active mayor and politician. He hired a new deputy mayor and chief of staff, Tom Houston, a former Fair Political Practices Commission chair known as a liberal

reformer with an eye for the public relations impact of his boss' policies and activities.

In a resounding shake-up last May, Bradley asked for the resignations of all 150 city commissioners, and accepted two-thirds of them, appointing younger, more liberal advocate types to the 33 commissions. Consumer, environmental and labor activists were well represented, and the new appointees organized themselves into ethnic, racial and sexual caucuses, the better to represent their interest groups to the mayor. The overhaul gave the commissions the appearance of a campaign cadre in the making.

Since then he's pleased liberals by going to the mat with Police Chief Daryl Gates, over the new Police Commission. And he followed up an unsuccessful community attempt to recall City Council member Art Snyder, who represents a mostly Hispanic East L.A. district, with a plan to expand the city council from 15 to 17 seats, and to redraw boundaries to ensure at least one Hispanic council member. He got council

getter in the black community, and the Democrats are going to need that at the top of the ticket."

Houston agrees. "In the last race there was more fear of a backlash against a black candidate campaigning in the black community," he said. But even with his appeal to black voters, Houston notes, Bradley was able to carry the white, conservative San Fernando Valley, for the first time in his five mayoral races. "This was his most effective, hard-hitting campaign yet, and it paid off everywhere."

The other Gary Hart.

Houston and Townsend advance the official line that the mayor has not made up his mind about 1986. But both maintain that potential Democratic primary opposition isn't figuring in Bradley's decision. "Tom Bradley is the only name that can raise \$5 or \$6 million statewide," Townsend contends.

But that hasn't stopped other Democratic hopefuls from raising money and lining up

CALIFORNIA

Democratic frontrunners push ahead in gubernatorial race

support for the plan, but voters nixed it at the same time as they re-elected him mayor.

But the clearest look at the "new" Tom Bradley came in his mayoral re-election campaign, and it provided a preview of how another run against Deukmejian might differ from the last. The most notable change was Bradley's emphasis on getting out the black vote in his South Central L.A. home turf. Bradley had high visibility at rallies and community events there, as well as in Hispanic areas, occasionally giving his campaign the "movement" fervor his strategists so carefully avoided in the gubernatorial run. The effort paid off—in the South Central 8th District, Bradley received 4,000 more votes than he did running against Yorty in 1981, beating Ferraro 34,832 to 833.

Bradley ran a notably more aggressive, on-the-offense campaign throughout the city. In the past, concern about alienating white voters had caused his campaigns to avoid direct attacks on his white opponents. This race put that conventional wisdom aside and saw Bradley go after Ferraro personally and in advertising.

Political consultant David Townsend, who worked for Bradley in his governor's race and this year's election, thinks the 1985 campaign gave Bradley a chance to test a more aggressive approach. "There was a campaign decision not to go after the black vote in 1982," Townsend notes. "This election shows him a proven vote-

support. Several powerful prospects have taken themselves out of speculation early: Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy and Attorney General John Van De Kamp have announced they'll stay where they are for now.

San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein keeps her name out there. Like Bradley, Feinstein's reputation got a boost from being considered for Walter Mondale's potential running mate (which may have been the unfortunate by-product of the push for a woman vice president). Although Feinstein has said she's not willing to be fodder in a hopeless race against Deukmejian, or a spoiler challenging Bradley or Cranston in a primary, she continues to be mentioned as a prospect, most recently in an out-of-nowhere set of remarks by Willie Brown.

Bradley's '82 primary challenger, State Sen. John Garamendi, is more likely to make the race, despite a promise to Bradley to stay out of the 1986 contest, in exchange for help in retiring his last campaign debt. Garamendi earned statewide recognition with his 1982 bid. But it cost him the support of some of his legislative colleagues, who punished him for putting his political ambitions ahead of his Sacramento duties by stripping him of his Senate majority leader position.

The most intriguing politician likely to challenge Bradley is State Sen. Gary Hart (D-Santa Barbara). With the support of L.A.'s Waxman and U.S. Rep. Howard Berman—and a name-recognition boost thanks to the Colorado senator's presiden-

..... IN THESE TIMES, MAY 8-14, 1985 "7. tial primary win last year—he's been making very public exploratory gestures, raising more than \$150,000 and some impressive support.

Hart is a ray of hope for some state Democratic politicians, especially the younger generation, who grow faint at the thought of a Bradley/Cranston ticket. He got a lot of mileage out of Hart's presidential campaign, an effort he supported and whose "new ideas" emphasis he shares. With his California good looks and his respectably liberal voting record—he's mainly associated with education and environmental issues, but he votes well on most labor, consumer, welfare and women's legislation—Hart seems a made-to-order Democratic politician for the '80s.

That's not to say no substance backs his style. Hart's political roots are in the anti-war movement. He worked for the late Allard Lowenstein's "Dump Johnson" effort and turned in his draft card in 1967, a piece of information that is still used against him in his legislative campaigns. Even as his

statewide stock has climbed, he's maintained the loyal support of his liberal-left Santa Barbara constituency. His three largest contributors so far are Santa Barbaraans Maryanne Mott and Katherine Tremaine and Stanley Scheinbaum of Los Angeles, mainstays of left philanthropy in the state and nationally as well.

He has support, some of it generational, on the legislature's left. Assemblyman Tom Hayden is raising funds for him, and Hart hasn't downplayed his relationship to Hayden or the Campaign for Economic Democracy, as do many other statewide politicians. He debuted before the Bay Area left at Assemblyman Tom Bates' annual dinner in March, where he was received with a lot of curiosity and some enthusiasm (despite a something-for-everyone speech that will have to be sharpened if it's going to play for the next 19 months).

But Hart's bid has inspired cynicism in some quarters. Many see it as a scheme by Waxman and Berman—and, to a lesser extent, Hayden—to achieve statewide, not just Southern California, power. Houston is predictably derisive. "I don't know where his backing comes from other than Berman and Waxman. He's unheard of statewide, except for the other Gary Hart. In a contested primary, he'd pull 10 percent of the vote."

Hart administrative aide and long-time political strategist Jerry Seedborg is diplomatic. He says Bradley's decisive re-election will have "very little" to do with Hart's ultimate decision, which he says won't be made before the fall. "Gary got into this assuming that Bradley would run for governor, and assuming he'd win easily in L.A. We just don't think his strength there is indicative of his strength statewide."

Though Hart professes to be willing to make the race even if Bradley does too, he can't be too cold-blooded. Even with a clear shot at Deukmejian he'd be an underdog. And making a "practice" run seems foolhardy, since Hart would have to give up his senate seat to do it.

But if the two Democrats do go head to head, look for a battle that displays the national party's conflicts in microcosm: upstart Democrats advancing new images and ideas in the name of the party's very survival campaigning against the once-defeated warhorse of the old but still-kicking coalition. It should be less demoralizing than the national conflict, though. Gary Hart is neither a racist nor a rank opportunist, and Tom Bradley has shown he can come up with some new images and ideas of his own.



Mayor Tom Bradley still maintains he has no plans to run for governor. But he's been saying that over the roar of his revved-up political engines since the 1982 elections and his mayoral mandate.



EUROPE

Reconciliation is a reversal of history

By Alex Amerisov

RECONCILIATION. THAT IS WHAT Ronald Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl want. They are calling for this "reconciliation" on the 40th anniversary of what all of Europe, in fact the whole world, considers a liberation from slavery imposed by German Nazism.

Isn't it strange that the two closest allies and trading partners in the Western world have decided that, after all, they still need to be reconciled? Apparently, tens of billions of dollars in trade, half a million American troops in Germany in "defense" of that country are not sufficient symbols of reconciliation. Something is still lacking. Kohl and his friends in Bavaria want to stop feeling guilty for the crimes committed in the name of Germany, or so they say. They also say that they are willing to bear "a collective shame" for those crimes—forever. That's also strange, because nobody in their right mind ever accused *all* Germans of being guilty of killing or causing the deaths of almost 50 million people, six million of them Jews.

Something "really" German.

German Nazism was born in 1919 in Munich, Bavaria. Its founders felt uncomfortable with the German workers revolution taking place at that time. The lower middle classes had been devastated by World War I and were disappointed with the abolition of absolute monarchy in that country. They thirsted for something strong, dynamic and "really" German. They hated Communists. But there were too many Communists at that time, so they decided to take out their hatred on the Jews, who they also disdained. Not being rich themselves, they were also jealous of those who were, whom they called "capitalists." But because capitalists supported the Nazis, "capitalists" became "Jewish capitalists."

The "baby" was really ugly, but the parents, as parents the world over, loved him. They christened him "national-socialism." *Socialism* because that name was in vogue then and *national* because they did not want to share it with anybody else.

The baby grew, and as it did, it complained out loud: "Nobody respects me,

everybody dislikes me." So at that time Nazi leaders insisted on "human rights" and talked about "democracy, freedom and sacred rights of private property." But neither Jews nor workers particularly liked the Nazis, who had a habit of shooting at them.

Yet the Nazis were heroes to other small-town folk: sales people, shop-keepers, clerks and *lumpen-proletariat*. Having nobody to represent them politically and having nothing in common to unite them, they yearned for the Kaiser and "the good old days." Nazism was a reason for all of them to unite. It told them that they were... Germans.

But workers resisted. Not only did they still consider themselves workers and internationalists, but also there were a lot of Jews among their political leaders. Thousands of them died in the streets fighting Hitler's SA (Stormtroopers). Many SA heads were smashed, but the Nazis persevered.

In 1933, with the help of leading German industrialists, they succeeded in getting the president of the Weimar Republic to appoint Adolf Hitler *reichschancellor* of the Republic. Within weeks, the Communist Party was accused of treason and a short time later most Communists found themselves in Dachau, the first Nazi deathcamp. As exterminations made more space available in the camp, it was filled with democrats, Jews and other "stabbers in the back of Germany."

Hitler made German life easier, if not better. First, he burned books that were unhealthy for the "new" German nation—books written by Karl Marx, John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Dreiser and others detrimental to children's emotional well-being. Second, although being of Catholic origin, Hitler pronounced the supremacy of Evangelical Christianity. He combined the Calvinist and Lutheran Churches and brought this new synthetic teaching into the schools. Third, he proclaimed the "reconciliation" of the interests of capitalists and workers, who now were simply called "Germans." From now on, Hitler said, the Germans are the "real people." Others are inferior and must work for the Germans.

Jews were closest at hand and without international support, so he went to work

first on taking whatever possessions Jews had, and then, for those who could not buy their way out, he made an "offer they simply could not refuse." Jews will work, he said. To make sure that Jews worked, he ordered them sent to concentration camps.

Hitler hated the "rootlessness" of the Jews. As the most powerful man in the "best" country in the world, he set out to solve the millenium-long "Jewish question" with his own "solution." He wanted to make sure that nobody else—Jew or non-Jew—would ever have to bother with this problem again.

Onward.

After France and Britain responded favorably to his request to occupy Austria and later Czechoslovakia, so he could move

left to be enslaved. All the German male population were soldiers, killers or foremen. Women were turned into incubators for racial purity. Germany became a nation of parasites on the bloodstream of Europe. England, which had an agreement with both Poland and France to defend those two countries, had not yet fired a shot.

In April 1941, Hitler turned his eyes to the East seriously and proclaimed publicly that "Bolshevik Russia—the deadliest enemy of national-socialism," was next. At the same time, he completed his work on the "final solution" for Jews. Slavs, especially Russians—the lowest race next to the Jews—were ordered to do hard labor in concentration camps.

On June 22 of that year, Hitler bombed the city of Kiev and advanced into Russia on a broad front. But Russia is not Europe and the Soviet Union is not France. The German intrusion on Russian territory was the beginning of the end of Nazism. All people of the Soviet Union united in the struggle against the beast. After the first six months, the initial lack of preparedness had been corrected. Every soldier now had

IN THE WORLD

Forty years after



closer to "Bolshevik" Russia, Hitler decided to take the rest of Europe before he took on the colossus in the East. Only Poland offered any resistance. France, whose bourgeoisie was shaken by their experience of the Communist-led Popular Front government of 1937, decided, like the German bourgeoisie before, that Nazis were better than Communists.

By 1940, Hitler dominated Europe. No country was left to be conquered, no people

a gun. New airplanes and tanks were being built in Siberia.

The entire world held its breath as Hitler's armies advanced to Moscow. The fate, not only of the Soviet Union but of Europe and the world, was at stake. Meanwhile, the "final solution," which began in earnest with Hitler's invasion of Russia, was in full swing. With huge military operations taking place on Soviet soil, Hitler saw no reason to restrain himself any

longer. All Jews were to be killed. Heinrich Himmler's SS was to put them to hard labor first, before burning them alive in specially designed crematoriums.

By spring 1942 almost 1,500,000 Jews had been slaughtered—most of them in the Baltic Republic of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, with the active cooperation of traitors, many of whom now reside in the U.S. Soviet Communists were tortured or killed on the spot. Villages were burned, little babies were killed before their screaming mothers, just for the fun of it and to show who was boss.

Russians are not mean people. It is in their character to share their last piece of bread with a stranger. The hospitality of Soviets is well known. Yet Hitler told the Germans that they were "free," while the Russians were "slaves"; Hitler told the Germans that they were "God-loving, peaceful people," while the Russians were "godless, Communist barbarians"; the Germans were "defending democracy," while the Russian bosses were defending "slavery." And the "inferior Russian" will quickly give up, he said.

Fight to the death.

But the Russians fought. When totally surrounded they would wait until the enemy came close, and then they would blow up themselves and the Germans. When they had no more bullets, they fought with their hands, to the death. When a pilot had no more gas to get back to his base, he would crash his plane on the nearest cluster of Germans.

Half the people of blockaded Leningrad died. But the city stood. People ate cats, dogs and rats. But the city stood. In the last winter of the three-year blockade, tens of thousands died daily from the cold and hunger. But the city stood. To raise the city's spirit, Leningrad's actors performed in a stone-cold theater; actors died on the stage. But the city stood.

Not one piece of wood was left in the city. Every tree, every piece of furniture, every floorboard was burned to keep warm, except the century-old trees around Alexander Pushkin's former home. It would have been easy to cut them down, since no one guarded them, but nobody did. People died by the thousands. But the trees stood.

And the city stood. For three-and-a-half years, the Soviets fought the Nazis alone. The Second Front was not opened until May 1944, when, for the first time, American and British troops entered the fight against German fascism in the heart of Europe.

In April 1945, Soviet soldiers made their final assault on Berlin. More than 1,500,000 troops defended Berlin. But Soviet soldiers could not be stopped. On April 5, the Soviet flag of victory flew over the Reichstag. The war had come back to where it started.

If in 1933, it was only one of Hitler's big lies that the Communists wanted to burn down the Reichstag, then in April 1945 it was true—the wolf den was in flames. An eternal flame was lit for the 22 million Soviet citizens who gave their lives fighting Nazism. Among the six million Jews who died, two million were Soviet Jews, and they were the most decorated ethnic group in the Soviet army. There were also four million Poles, 12 million Germans (among them one million anti-fascists), two million Yugoslavs, 350,000 American soldiers (one-third of them black), and 150,000 Britains. Millions of Italians, French, Greeks, Czechs and others were included among the almost 50 million who lost their lives.

Reagan and Kohl obviously consider this act not as an act of liberation of mankind, Germany included, from the darkest forces in human history, but as an act of defeat, a point of "decline of political influence of Europe." Their "reconciliation" is an attempt to reverse this history for specific purposes.

Around many concentration camp sites in West Germany today, people hand out leaflets to visitors. They are members of the German Green Party and other left-wing groups. The leaflets are headlined: "Soviet soldiers—thank you!"

Soviet exile Alex Amerisov writes frequently for *In These Times*.

EUROPE

Remembering the days of fashionable fascism

By Daniel Lazare

IN HIS CONFRONTATION WITH PRESIDENT Reagan in mid-April, the Holocaust writer Elie Wiesel wondered how "the greatest democracy in the world, the freest nation in the world, the moral nation, the authority in the world" could honor Waffen SS members at Bitburg while snubbing their victims at Dachau.

Wiesel is either the greatest idiot since Neville Chamberlain or so morally skewed that he sees nothing wrong with an administration that (1) sponsors a *contra* guerrilla war in Nicaragua where the methods consist mainly of rape, torture and attacks on unarmed civilians, (2) blames South African police massacres on violence-prone blacks, and (3) declares Chile to be "in good hands" with Augusto Pinochet, a self-proclaimed latter-day Caesar—as long as it shows proper respect to the victims of the death camps.

Reagan's rendezvous with Nazism should come as no surprise. Not only is the Reagan administration partial to "authoritarian" Third World despots, but, like their president, many Americans admire men of action and political leaders who are tough on Communists. In the '20s, the man who fitted that description perfectly was a socialist agitator turned right-wing nationalist named Benito Mussolini.

Mussolini was nearly as popular among American pundits in the '20s and early '30s as Winston Churchill was in the '40s. The *Saturday Evening Post* serialized his autobiography for the benefit of its nearly three million subscribers. Cole Porter wrote a hit tune that included the line (later excised), "You're the top, you're the Mussolini...." Providence, R.I., named a street after *Il Duce*, and the frontier humorist Will Rogers, after being granted a highly publicized interview, reassured readers of his newspaper column that Mussolini was a "regular guy."

"Dictator form of government is the greatest form of government; that is, if you have the right dictator," Rogers wrote, leaving no doubt that Mussolini was Mr. Right.

The American Legion, whose members lynched Wobblies and tore apart union halls, took its inspiration from Mussolini's Black Shirts—to no one's surprise. "The American Legion is fighting every element that threatens our democratic government—Soviets, anarchists, IWW, revolutionary socialists, and every other 'red.' ...Do not forget that the *fascisti* are to Italy what the American Legion is to the United States," the Legion's national commander Alvin Owsley observed in 1923. Over at *Nation's Business*, a publication of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Mussolini was admired as a high-powered, take-charge, American-style executive, a kind of George F. Babbitt in a black shirt. As an editor wrote in 1927:

"I can understand why a businessman would admire Mussolini and his methods. They are essentially those of successful business. Executive actions, not conferences and talk. Mistakes, yes, but action...."

But infatuation with fascism had a special small-town Chamber of Commerce flavor all its own, a combination of fierce anti-Communism and relentless business optimism. Calvin Coolidge (who made his name breaking the 1919 Boston police strike) was in the White House, some 5,000 leftists had been rounded up in the Palmer raids of 1919, and blacks were being lynched throughout Dixie. Right-wing patriots were therefore not inclined to be squeamish when a co-thinker overseas used

ruthless measures to crush a powerful socialist movement in his own country.

In fact, they were delighted. To the *Chicago Tribune*, fascism was "the most striking and successful attempt of the middle classes to meet the tide of revolutionary socialism." The *New York Tribune* referred to Mussolini as a "Black-shirted Garibaldi." The *Saturday Evening Post*, the most widely circulated magazine in the country, congratulated him for turning "red terror into white fear" and pronounced him an economic genius.

Even a few self-styled Progressives such as Ida Tarbell, the original muckraking journalist, and Lincoln Steffens were infected by the plague and the feminist International Suffrage Alliance gave Mussolini a rapturous reception when he addressed their convention in Rome.

Leftists were initially thrown into confusion by the strange new political disease of fascism when it arose after World War I, but with time its nature as the final solution to the problem of class war became clear. It was a kind of Carthaginian peace in which the left-wing working class was plowed six feet under and the soil sewn with salt so that nothing would ever grow again.

The attraction it held for right-wing captains of industry, especially after the 1929 economic crisis, was therefore deep. American capitalists who had welcomed Mussolini in 1923 could not help making excuses for Hitler a decade later. Hitler was hysterical, raving, many times more violent than Mussolini in language and deed. But the business community was still obtuse, short-sighted and endlessly forgiving of anyone offering to help stem the Communist tide.

Thus, *Business Week* noted in 1935 that while some Germans "questioned" the lack of democracy, "certain accomplishments...must be credited to the Nazis," such as cutting unemployment and increasing industrial production.

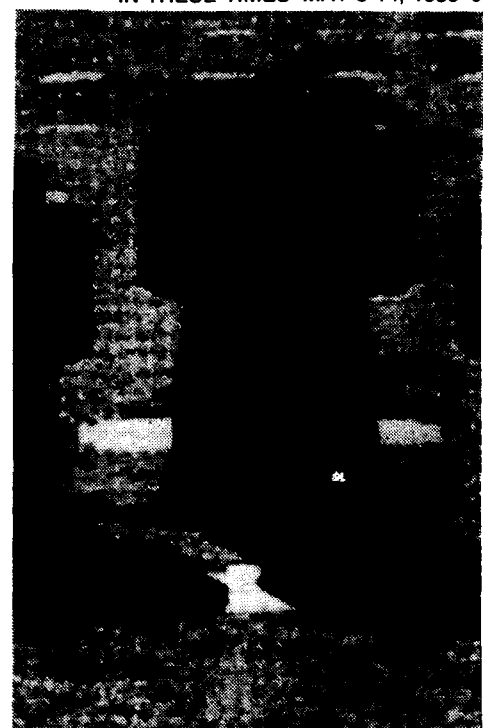
In 1936, the *Saturday Evening Post* congratulated the Nazis for evading the restrictions imposed on Germany by the victorious Allies after World War I. "The Germans might have despaired of the future of their Fatherland," the magazine wrote. "In truth, many did. But their leaders did not. They swore they would liberate their people. ...And as they triumphed, they had gained such momentum that it seemed nothing could stop them."

But perhaps the most extraordinary voice of accommodation belonged to Anne O'Hare McCormick, a well-known foreign correspondent in the '20s and '30s for the *New York Times*. McCormick idolized Mussolini, but was distinctly cooler toward Hitler, probably because he was such an irreverent upstart. Nonetheless, she was still generous in judging the *fuehrer*.

She found reason, for instance, to praise the Nazi regime's "knocking down of class barriers, which is the feature of the work camps, the new educational program and all the Nazi organizations, will quicken the pulse of social democratization which separates the Germany of today from the stratified empire of the past." Under Hitler, she said, "the nation summoned into being has more energy, more faith in itself, more harmony in its own genius, than the artificial democracy it displaces."

Those smarmy sentiments appeared in the *Times* in September 1933, eight months after Hitler's accession to power—eight months marked by mass arrests, the eradication of civil liberties, militarization of the economy and the virtual outlawing of the Jews.

For a time, Hitler's ultra-radical brand of fascism made Mussolini seem like an elder statesman of the far right in comparison. But if Hitler was less lovable, he was



also more frightening. Hitler's small army of sympathizers and appeasers, both here and abroad, thus set about earnestly cultivating the myth of Nazi invincibility.

Hitler's early admirers.

Among them was Joseph Kennedy, Roosevelt's ambassador to Great Britain, an isolationist who advocated a retreat into a Fortress America where he fully expected some form of fascism to prevail. Herbert Hoover, who headed up the isolationist wing of the Republican Party, made it clear that between Hitler and Stalin, it was Stalin whom he regarded as the greater threat to "democratic ideals."

After the war, the appeasers were anxious to forgive and forget. Republican Sen. Robert A. Taft opposed the prosecution of Nazis for crimes against humanity, and the Office of Strategic Services and CIA made use of hundreds of East European Nazi collaborators in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Simon Wiesenthal said he was spurred into action as a Nazi hunter by the appalling willingness of U.S. military authorities to let bygones be bygones as far as Hitler's subordinates were concerned.

Is there a connection between those sentiments and President Reagan's eagerness to bypass Dachau on his way to the SS graves at Bitburg? The answer is yes. Four decades may have elapsed but the thread is not broken.

The spirit of appeasement continues with Patrick Buchanan, Reagan's chief of communications, who in a 1982 column in the *Washington Times* blamed "hairy-chested Nazi hunters" in the U.S. Justice Department for conducting an "official lynching" of a former guard at the Treblinka concentration camp. "I just think it's hypocritical to be collaborating with the Yugoslav government and the Soviet government in running down people who worked for a government which we smashed and destroyed 35, 40 years ago," he added in a TV interview.

The urge to forgive Mussolini and Hitler their excesses continues in the Reagan administration's fondness for right-wing Third World dictators who combat subversion by arranging for human rights activists conveniently to "disappear." Students of "the greatest democracy in the world, the freest nation in the world, the moral nation" will recall Jeane Kirkpatrick's article in *Commentary* in 1979 in which she first drew the fatuous distinction between authoritarian leaders who merit American support and totalitarians who don't.

The difference, according to the article, is that totalitarians (i.e. Communists) thoroughly disrupt the social fabric, while "traditional autocrats...do not disturb the habitual rhythms of work and leisure, habitual places of residence, habitual patterns of family and personal relations."

The language is curiously evocative of Anne O'Hare McCormick's soothing reassurances in 1933 that "life goes on" under Hitler, "it's deepest habits unbroken." The *fuehrer*, at least in his early years, was an authoritarian with whom many current-day conservatives would be more than willing to strike a deal.

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

SOCIALISM AND PROPORTIONAL elections are both great ideas. But in the political climate of France in the '80s, the Mitterrand version is not going to do justice to either one of them.

After some suspense while computers ran through data from the latest cantonal elections and various polls, the French president announced he was asking parliament to change the electoral law by which its members will be elected next year. The existing two-round majority system, which dates from de Gaulle's takeover in 1958 and the establishment of the Fifth Republic, gave the Socialist Party such a lopsided majority in the June 1981 elections (following Mitterrand's election as president) that it can pass any law it chooses. Next year the same system could give the right just as lopsided a majority. There lies one good reason for Mitterrand to change the system.

There are others. And, despite the shrieks of outrage from right-wing politicians (some of whom in the past have said they favored the proportional system, just as Mitterrand himself used to be against it), it is neither surprising nor unusual in France to change the electoral system. In the past century or so, it has been changed almost every third election. The Socialist Party program promised to introduce a proportional system, and so did Mitterrand as a candidate.

Still, he hesitated, and the Socialist Party itself is divided on the matter. The two-round majority system created the Union of the Left, the basis of Mitterrand's victory in 1981. It forced Communists and Socialists to get together on the second round, with each party agreeing to desist in favor of the leading left candidate in each district. The system accentuated the sharp left-right political cleavage.

Now, says the Socialist Party's international and defense specialist Jacques Huntzinger, "the union of the left is dead." And with the proportional system there will be no good reason to revive it. Socialist Party first secretary Lionel Jospin puts it more cagily: "The union of the left is not dead, but we won't revive it in identical form because the Communist Party in particular no longer wants it."

Centrist alliance?

With the Communist Party (PCF) in decline and the left headed for almost sure defeat next year, Mitterrand and his popular young Prime Minister Laurent Fabius are visibly yearning for some sort of centrist alliance. By blurring the left-right dichotomy, the proportional would seem to offer greater hope of a varied political spectrum that could make Mitterrand's loss of a majority less obvious and give him a chance to put together a middle-of-the-road coalition.

In practice, however, the right-wing parties in line to win next year are ferociously opposed to any alliance with the Socialists and immediately signed a pact vowing to stick together. Former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac indicated their readiness to cooperate in a right-wing government while Mitterrand completes the last two years of his seven-year presidential mandate.

However, Giscard's former prime minister, Raymond Barre, swiftly denounced such "cohabitation." Barre demanded that a right-wing majority in the next National Assembly immediately repeal the proportional and restore the two-round majority system. He hopes that Mitterrand will be obliged to step aside and allow a presidential election that Barre himself clearly hopes to win. His impatience is easily explained by the fact that Barre is currently running far ahead of Giscard and Chirac in the polls, but has reason to doubt that his lead could survive a period of "cohabitation."

If Barre has his way, the proportional, as well as other Socialist reforms, will be of short duration.

In principle, the proportional is the more democratic of the two systems. The two-round majority system was invented in 1871 by monarchists and was favored by

conservatives from the start because it favors local "notables" over parties based on ideas and programs. So does the district election system used in the U.S. All other European democracies except Britain use some sort of proportional system.

In all these systems, voters choose between rival party lists of candidates, and

French politics has traditionally been a rival assemblage of prima donnas, each a potential Great Man, surrounded by his groupies hoping to pursue careers on his coattails. Mitterrand was a perfect product of that system in its post-war Fourth Republic version. Except for the Communist Party, French political parties are more or

FRANCE

Socialists reform electoral policy

seats are distributed among the parties according to the percentage of the total vote won by their list. This is calculated by several different methods worked out by mathematicians (such as the "Hondt method" developed by the Belgian mathematician Victor Hondt a century ago). Some countries set a threshold under which a party is not represented. The threshold is 2 percent in Denmark, 4 percent in Sweden and 5 percent in West Germany.

The way the system works depends on how many voting districts the country is divided into. Holland has a pure proportional system: the whole country is a single circumscription and parliamentary seats are distributed to parties according to the percentage they got, even very small parties. Israel also uses a pure proportional system.

West Germany uses a complicated combined system that gives each voter two votes, one for the local candidate and the other for the favored party. All this is figured up to distribute Bundestag seats to parties according to the percentages indicated by the second ballot, but giving preference to individuals who won in their local districts.

The proportional system allows a full range of positions to be represented in parliament. It allows new movements like the West German Greens into the political system. Theoretically, it could do the same in France. But the signs are not encouraging. On the left, nothing is stirring in the grassroots in France. The ecology label may attract votes, but probably on a rather superficial basis. The only new movement certain to profit from the proportional is Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme right National Front.

For French President Mitterrand to have a happy last two years as president, the right would need to fall into its component pieces.

less precarious alliances between these prima donnas. One question is how well they will stick together without the majority system to hold them together. For Mitterrand to have a happy last two years as president, the best thing that could happen would be for the right to fall into its component pieces, leaving the Socialist Party as the one big party as a center around which Mitterrand could try to juggle other ambitions.

But the opposite could happen: the right could get together to sweep the elections as the one biggest party, and the Socialist Party could split. This does not seem likely, but the possibility loomed when Mitterrand's former rival, Michel Rocard, quite unexpectedly resigned as minister of agriculture in protest against adoption of the proportional system.

Rocard complained indignantly that people suspected him of resigning only to further his presidential ambitions. Indeed, they did, especially since even the Rocardians in the Socialist Party couldn't understand the reasons for being so opposed to the proportional system. It appeared that Rocard jumped at the pretext to get back his freedom of speech to try to revive his image and popularity prior to the 1988 presidential elections.

At 54, the time to cash in on his boy-wonder image is growing short. Mitterrand dealt Rocard the worst possible blow to his future prospects by appointing as prime minister another, younger boy wonder, Laurent Fabius. As the most painful twist of the knife, Fabius—who pilloried Rocard at the Metz congress of the Socialist Party six years ago for preferring the market to socialism—has been playing to perfection the Rocardian role of the non-doctrinaire

pragmatist who recognizes the value of the market and free enterprise. As a result, Fabius has been skyrocketing in the polls and this month for the first time passed Rocard as the most popular political leader on the left, with 57 percent favorable opinions compared to 51 for the former champion.

Rocard could also be motivated to get out of the Agriculture Ministry before the peasants start rioting at the price they are going to have to pay for bringing Spain and Portugal into the Common Market.

Rocard bungled his exit. His objections to the proportional are too technical to rally a following. Mitterrand Socialists have a new reason for detesting him, and his chances of ever being Socialist Party candidate for president appear virtually nil.

In any case, Mitterrand's proportional system is not all that proportional, since it is by department, with no national corrective. That means that the elections will be run separately in each of the country's hundred departments (administrative units). Aside from the 5 percent barrier, most departments have too few seats in parliament—one per 108,000 inhabitants—to give representation to small parties.

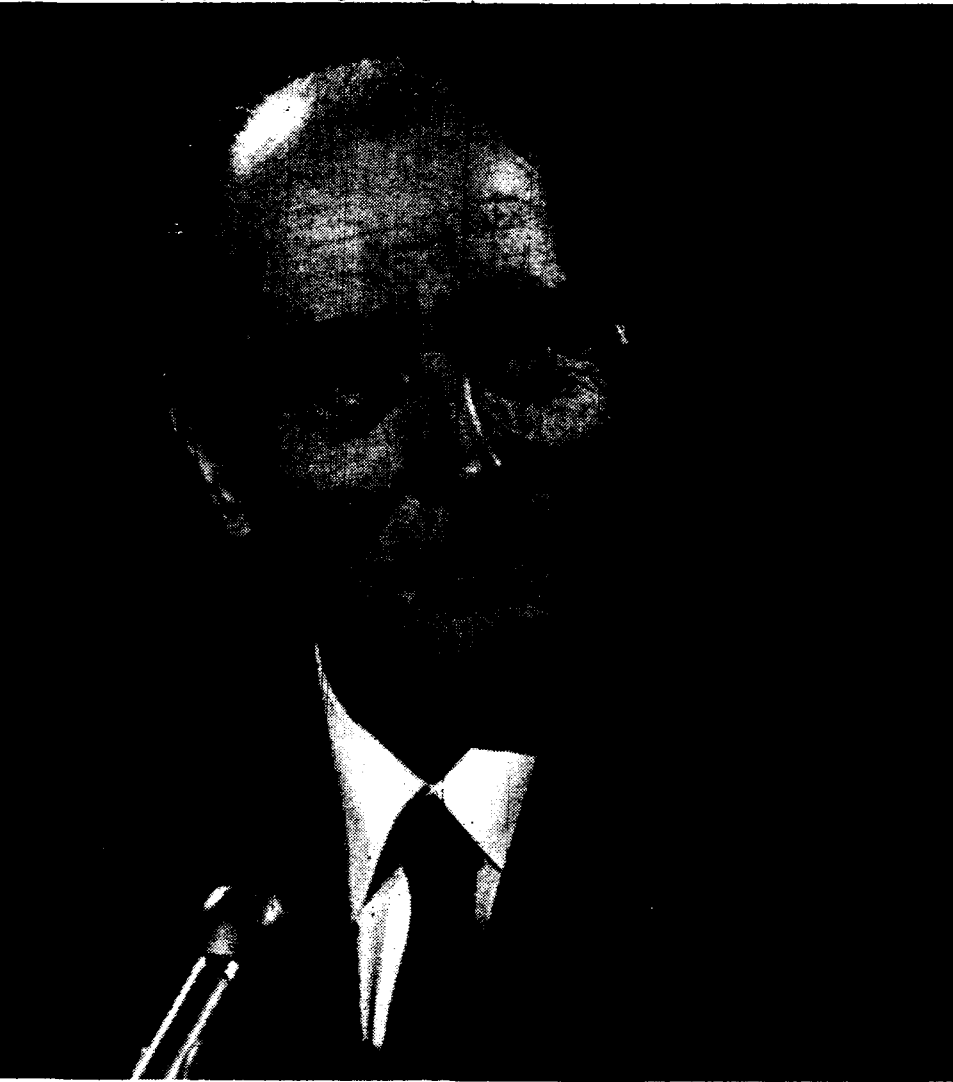
As an illustration, suppose the Communist Party scored 11 percent nationwide, its score in last year's European Parliamentary elections. It would have a chance for a seat only in departments with six or more seats—that is, only 35 out of 100. Its votes in the other departments would be lost. As for still smaller parties, such as the ecologists, they will stand a chance only in the few departments with large urban areas giving them 10 or more seats—only 14 in all.

Communist André Lejoinie complained that "with this law, minority parties would be clearly under-represented." The Communist Party will try to amend it to include national recuperation of votes not represented in the departments, but half-heartedly. It seems to have just enough energy left to grumble a bit, but that's all.

More vigorous criticism came from the Unified Socialist Party (PSU): "This electoral system has as much to do with proportional elections as the neutron bomb has to do with ecology. It strengthens the big parties (PS, RPR, UDF—that is, the Socialists and the two right-wing formations), it cuts back the medium-sized ones (National Front and PCF) and excludes the rest."

On the right, only Jean-Marie Le Pen expressed satisfaction. Yet the proportional will get the main right parties, RPR and UDF, off the hook the Socialists had seemed to want to skewer them on: the choice of whether or not to ally with the National Front in the second round. ■

The Communist Party is in decline and the left is headed for almost sure defeat next year. Mitterrand's current push for proportional elections could give him a chance to put together a centrist alliance.



By William Gasperini

MANAGUA

NICARAGUA RESPONDED TO Washington's declaration of a trade embargo last week by calling the move an "aggressive action which ironically will affect the private sector of the country's economy."

"Although they intend to harm our government by taking this action, those who will feel the blockade most will be private producers and the Nicaraguan people," said Vice-President Sergio Ramirez.

Although the full extent of the blockade is unclear, the meat and banana sectors are likely to be those most affected in the short run. Over two-thirds of Nicaragua's meat and bananas currently go to the U.S., and finding alternate outlets for these easily perishable products will be difficult. The U.S. market now accounts for only 16-18 percent of Nicaragua's imports and exports. The longer-term impact will therefore undoubtedly be secondary: the lack of spare parts and equipment for farm machinery, computers and other U.S. products widely used in Nicaragua. Inevitably, changing over to other technologies will involve high costs, and the immediate loss of just 15 percent will hurt the already fragile economy.

Defense Minister Humberto Ortega likened the blockade to the devastating earthquake that leveled Managua in 1972, and calls the embargo another step toward "an inevitable direct U.S. military intervention in the region." But, he said, Nicaragua will "never cry uncle."

"After causing this earthquake [the blockade], which we will survive, which we already are surviving, they stab us and say, 'surrender,' ask our 'pardon,' 'kneel down,'" Ortega said. "They ask us, 'You want chiclets?' 'Yes, Uncle Sam.' 'You want consumer products?' Yes, Uncle Sam."

The announcement of the blockade came just days after the country responded favorably to Congress' decision to not continue financing the counterrevolutionary *contras*. However, for Nicaragua the issue was not whether the U.S. backed the anti-Sandinista *contras*. Rather, what was at stake the night of April 23, as Congress prepared to vote on the \$14 million *contra* aid, involved basic international rights and national sovereignty.

"Independent of what individual Congress members think of the Sandinista revolution, the issue is instead what should be considered proper international conduct and principals of law," said a government communique released shortly after the initial vote results came in on April 23. "The very fact that a Congress of a country calling itself democratic and respectful can discuss continued financing of military and para-military activity against a sovereign state violates the most elemental form of international conduct."

The statement then criticized Senate approval of aid but applauded the House actions, calling it a signal that the U.S. wanted to "overcome its lost credibility as a serious and responsible member of the international community." The vote renewed hope for peace in the region, for the Contadora peace process, according to the communique.

For weeks discussion ensued in Managua as to what difference the \$14 million would actually make in continuing the war. It is no secret that the *contras* receive help from other sources, so the money was not the real issue. Political forces and congressional influence on Reagan administration policy lay at the center of the debate.

"They [the *contras*] needed to know the U.S. fully backed them," said one observer. "They can carry on with other money, but they will be demoralized without Congress' support. But it will not be catastrophic."

Others disagreed, saying it was obvious that the *contras* were not doing well and needed more money than they were getting. Reporters who recently visited the main base of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) in Honduras found a lack of supplies



NICARAGUA

House vote: a big step forward Trade embargo: a few steps back

and ammunition. FDN military leader Enrique Bermudez talked of difficulties maintaining supply lines to command forces fighting inside Nicaragua.

A Belgian TV crew recently encountered *contras* in the north who appeared gaunt and poorly supplied, pulling back in the face of a major Sandinista offensive that has pushed them eastward away from the Esteli and Jinotega regions and toward the Honduran border. Twelve special fighting battalions of 600 men each are now pursuing the *contras* in the interior, apart from regular army troops and interior ministry forces.

Commenting on the issue of the funding, Interior Minister Tomas Borge, the only surviving founder of the Sandinista Front, said, "Fourteen million dollars more or \$14 million less" would never change the "character" of the revolution.

"They can talk about this money, about breaking relations with Nicaragua, even about a direct invasion," he said. "But they can never discuss the will of our people to defend their country."

Borge then turned the tables on the U.S. "What would they say if Commandante Carlos Nunez and our National Assembly were to discuss spending millions of *cordovas* to bomb Mr. Reagan? No country has the right to discuss how to attack another in this manner."

In the end, however, few disputed the significance of the vote and its implications for Nicaragua's future. In Managua, April 23 had the feel of an election night. Anyone with a short wave radio was listening to the Voice of America, awaiting news from Washington. The country was on the edge—a decision affecting its future was being made in a distant capital. People were confused as word came in that the debate was continuing over the two compromise proposals.

The following day Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto applauded the House's final rejection of any type of aid, including the compromises. He said the U.S. lawmakers had given a categorical *no* to continuing "state banditry" and a clear *yes* to "seeking peace."

D'Escoto also said that the House vote reflected a "victory for the millions of North Americans with a Congress they can feel proud of, and want an end to the war against us. We hope this action will make President Reagan reflect on his policies and impell him to renew the talks with Nicaragua."

Almost before D'Escoto finished speak-

ing, Washington fired new salvos as Reagan announced that he would investigate other measures the administration could take without congressional approval. In response, President Daniel Ortega accused Reagan of "subverting the will of Congress and the American people" by insisting on new measures. He reiterated Managua's rejection of dialog with the FDN, strongest of the five *contra* groups, because it is run by the ex-Somoza National Guardsmen.

For two days prior to the April 23 congressional vote, a group of 38 mothers held a mass in a Managua church. All were mothers of children killed in action or currently serving in the armed forces. Hundreds of supporters came to the church during the 48-hour fast, including a group of handicapped war victims.

"I came for my son who was killed in combat, for my son in the army and for my young daughter," said Tomasa Lopez. "And I ask God to give me the strength to resist all of the things that have happened to me," she added, her voice cracking with emotion.

President Ortega also paid a visit, telling the crowd of mothers and supporters their fast was sending a signal northward. "The problems of Nicaragua can never be solved through violence and war, but only through dialog and negotiations." He told the mothers the North American people were "no different from you in desiring peace," and said U.S. public opinion was helping change policy toward Central America.

The day following the final House vote, *El Nuevo Diario*, one of Nicaragua's three daily newspapers, ran a series of photographs that appeared in the April 29 issue of *Newsweek*. The photos showed a *contra* cutting the throat of a Nicaraguan peasant. The pictures had a visible impact, although news of such atrocities is nothing new to Nicaraguans. Many expressed the hope the photos would further influence U.S. public opinion.

"We know the majority of North Americans are with us," said Josefina Gurdian, one of the fasting mothers. She was attending the 75th consecutive vigil that a committee of U.S. citizens living in Nicaragua have held in front of the U.S. Embassy in Managua. The citizens' group presented Gurdian and other mothers present with a symbolic check for \$1,400, "in contrast to the \$14 million Reagan wants to continue his war against the Nicaraguan people," according to the group. The committee later

delivered a real check to a National Emergency Relief fund helping persons displaced by the war.

The day following Congress' vote, word came that a tentative cease fire had been reached between the government and the Miskito Indian rebel group MISURASATA after talks in Mexico City. In exchange for a cessation of hostilities, the government agreed to send medical and food aid to villages on the coast, promote development programs such as fisheries and extend a general amnesty to rebel combatants in effect since December 1983.

Under the latter part of the agreement, Managua released on April 28 16 prisoners arrested for collaborating with MISURASATA. The former rebels were freed in two separate ceremonies in the Atlantic coast town of Puerto Cabezas.

The prisoners had been held for several months, some for up to a year. Approximately 50 more had been released previously, while others have surrendered and are now free under the amnesty law.

The Mexico talks were the fourth in a series of negotiations that began with MISURASATA leader Brooklyn Rivera's return visit to Nicaragua in October. The next round of talks will take place May 25 in Bogota, Colombia.

Sandinista leaders are careful to make the distinction between the negotiations with MISURASATA and their refusal to talk with the FDN. In his recent speech Interior Minister Borge said those in the Miskito group are "confused individuals who want to reach an accord with us," while the FDN is led by ex-National Guardsmen receiving their support from Washington. The other Miskito rebel group, MISURA, is aligned with the FDN and remains active on the Atlantic coast. Attacks directed by this group, including the ambush of several government vehicles, have increased in recent weeks in the north Zelaya region.

Also, two weeks ago the Vatican elevated Managua Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo to the status of cardinal. Obando has been one of the most outspoken critics of the Sandinistas, and the action will surely affect often strained church-state relations. President Ortega paid the new cardinal a visit after the Vatican announced his elevation. ■

William Gasperini writes regularly for *In These Times* from Central America.

By Eric Patterson

ESTELI, THE MAIN CITY IN THE COFFEE and cattle country of northern Nicaragua, lies in a high river valley surrounded by rugged hills. The Pan American Highway runs along the outskirts of the city, busy with the commercial traffic that provides the economic basis for the approximately 30,000 people who live there.

Along with the pickups, vans and 18-wheelers there are convoys of military-green jeeps, supply trucks and troop carriers and scores of young men and women in uniform hitching rides. The northern mountains are not only the center of some of Nicaragua's most productive agriculture, but also of the struggles between the revolutionary Nicaraguan government and the counter-revolutionary army sponsored by the U.S. government, the *contras*.

I travelled to Esteli just before last Christmas, staying for two weeks, to see the impact of the Reagan administration's "secret" war close up. I wanted something different from an abstract understanding of the overall economic and political effects of the war—I wanted to find out how it affects the daily lives of ordinary people.

In the U.S. we've heard a lot about Reagan's desire to "put pressure" on Nicaragua, to "turn the screws" on the Sandinistas, but not much about what the actions behind those metaphors really are, what they mean for the Nicaraguan people, or even who those people are. We know the amount of the proposed appropriations for the *contras*, but we don't know the human cost of the war.

To try to learn this, I interviewed as many people as I could, people from a variety of backgrounds and political orientations: housewives, lay church workers and priests, soldiers, members of rural agricultural coops, nurses, members of the FSLN, owners of small businesses and international volunteers. Time and again I was struck by the friendliness of the Nicaraguans I met and by their willingness to express their views freely.

None of them seemed to feel constrained in any way when we talked, and I encountered no government interference with my

work. Of course, I can't claim that my "sample" is exhaustive, but I believe my talks brought me closer to understanding the struggles going on now in Nicaragua.

***Campesino* support.**

Travelling in northern Nicaragua, it becomes clear that the war in that region isn't a civil war. While the *contras* have massive support from the U.S. and well-equipped

bases in Honduras and the mountains along the Nicaraguan side of the frontier, they haven't been able to control any population areas—no region or town is defined as *contra*-held territory.

This isn't surprising, given that support for the revolution continues to be strong (as the internationally supervised elections in November showed), particularly among the poor peasants, or *campesinos*, who are

the chief beneficiaries of the extensive land reform and other social programs. Although the people I met held a wide range of political views—some being quite critical of various Sandinista economic policies—none of them expressed any desire for a *contra* victory. Political slogans of the seven parties that participated in the elections covered the walls in Esteli and the surrounding towns and villages, but none



Steve Cagan

advocated any of the *contra* organizations or leaders.

While the leadership of the *contra* army in the north is largely drawn from that of Somoza's National Guard, the *contra* troops aren't only ex-guards and mercenaries. Everyone I spoke to said that the *contras* also recruit young Nicaraguans. But it was hard to get a satisfactory explanation of which social groups provide these recruits and why. There is discontent with the revolution, particularly among members of the middle class in Managua and the two old colonial cities, León and Granada, who resent the government's adamant protection of the interests of urban and rural workers and the difficulty of obtaining consumer goods due to sharply decreased trade with the U.S.

Toward the end of my stay I had a long talk with a young housing development officer in the Esteli FSLN, named Ronaldo, who offered the most convincing explanations of why people join the *contras*. While some members of the middle class clearly would prefer an economic and political order serving their needs alone and some strongly sympathize with the main *contra* group, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), he said he believed very few of them would be willing to make the personal sacrifice of fighting in the mountains.

Ronaldo's work brings him directly into the conflict—when I spoke with him his right arm was bandaged from a bullet wound he received in a *contra* ambush two days before—and he told me that many of the captured *contras* he sees are young *campesinos*. He explained that most of the *campesinos* are devout Catholics, and that a minority of them dislike the government since they see it as a threat to their faith.

Yet he dismissed this fear, and everything I've learned about Nicaragua tends to support him. Although some of the Nicaraguan leaders are Marxists and reject the church, many others are Catholics, including four priests. And while the government has had clashes with the church hierarchy, it continues to have strong support among local priests and nuns, the Christian base communities and much of the laity. The young soldiers and labor volunteers I met all described themselves as Catholics,

and the priests and lay church workers all expressed approval of the revolution. Two of the slogans I saw most frequently painted on walls were "*Cristianismo y Revolucion son iguales*"—Christianity and Revolution are the same—and "*Entre Cristianismo y Revolucion no hay contradiccion*"—Between Christianity and Revolution there is no contradiction.

Ronaldo explained that despite this alliance, the FDN, much of the Church hierarchy and the right-wing newspaper *La Prensa* have sought to persuade people that the socialist policies of the government do contradict religion, and their *campesino* recruits indicate that they've had some success.

Participants in the Witness for Peace organization, which brings North American clergy to the areas of the worst *contra* violence as a means of deterring further attacks, provided an additional answer to my question. They pointed out that the progress of such major social programs as land re-

form has been uneven, in part because of the war. Some *campesinos*, particularly those who already own some land and therefore are relatively better off, resent the changes in land distribution that have helped the landless, and so often support and even join the *contras*.

Because the *campesinos* aren't solidly behind them in any region and since their overall strategy is to disrupt an economy already weak from years of struggle against the Somoza dictatorship, the *contras* employ hit-and-run tactics against civilians throughout the north. They make sudden attacks on outlying coops, farms and villages, destroying as much equipment and livestock as possible. To drive people out, they instill terror—killing women and children as well as men, and often kidnapping people, torturing them and finally murdering them.

There has been so much violence against civilians since the *contras* began their raids in early 1982 that it's impossible to put

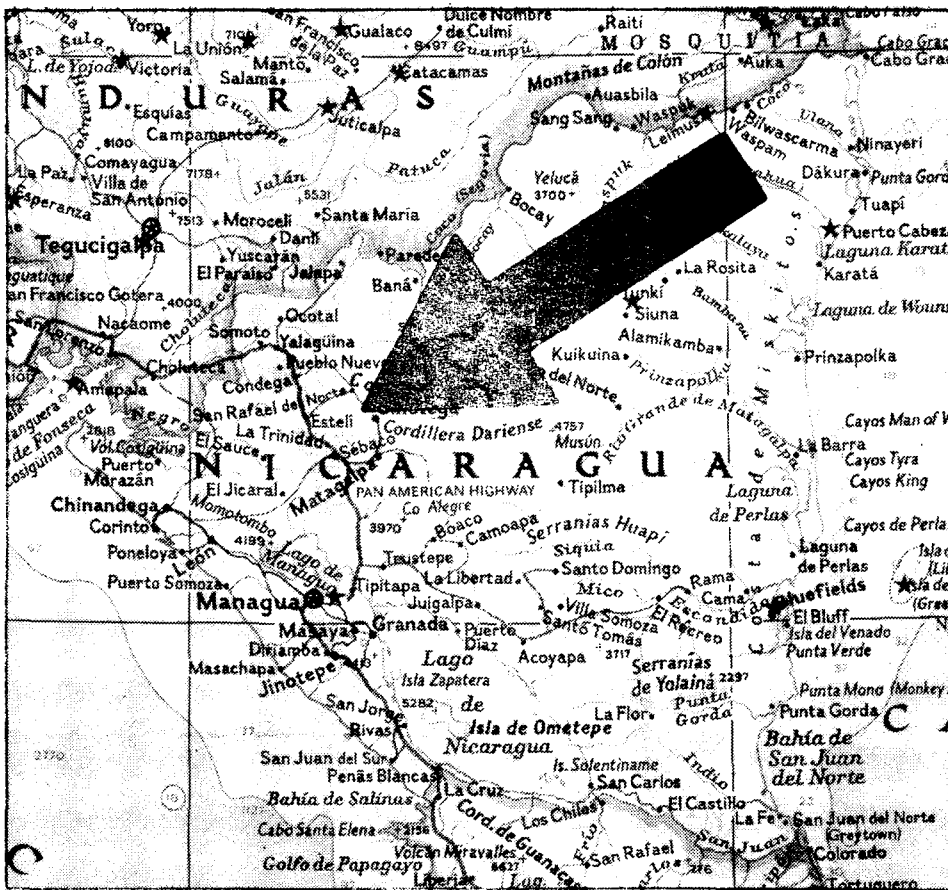
together a comprehensive overview of the conflict in the region. But to give some sense of what sort of a war it is, the following is a list of *contra* attacks from June to December, 1984. Throughout those months the *campesinos* who live in the northernmost area, the valley of the Rio Coco, were under almost continuous assault and towns and villages in this region—such as San Juan del Norte, Wiwili, Ocotol, Yali, El Jicaró and Jalapa were struck repeatedly.

In early June of last year the *contras* attempted to take Ocotol, which is on the Honduran border. They destroyed government offices, a radio station and a major lumber mill, abducted many people and caused the rest of the population to flee. They were unable to hold the town. Reinforcements of the Nicaraguan army arrived and drove them out after a few hours.

In mid-July there was another major attack, this time much closer to Esteli. The *contras* struck a large agricultural coop, Mirafior, about 10 miles north of the city, and destroyed a \$6 million agricultural development project sponsored by the Dutch government. More than 20 *campesinos* were wounded, and the president of the coop and the chief of police of Esteli were killed in the fighting. (Several people to whom I spoke said that the *contras* seek to kill as many leaders as possible in order to create maximum disorder. Whereas the manual the CIA provided for the *contras* euphemistically calls this "neutralization," the *contras* themselves describe it, in an appropriately brutal metaphor, as a policy of "decapitation.")

In early October the *contras* attacked rural coops in the hills east of Esteli—Iziqui, a chicken farm, and La Quinta, a dairy farm, both had to be evacuated and were severely damaged, and another, Las Carbonales, was completely destroyed after its people fled. On October 21, a quarter of the northern *contra* army (about 3,000 troops) massed against Esteli itself, surrounding the city and bombarding it from the hills to the south. Their mortar fire forced the evacuation of several barrios, and the attack only was driven back when government troops arrived with helicopters.

Continued on page 22



The *contras*:

they can't win,
but they can kill.

Photograph: Steve Cagan

EDITORIAL

April 24 was "a sad day for the *contras*," said Secretary of State George Shultz. And it was a day of unaccustomed defeat for the Reagan administration, for that was when the House of Representatives heeded the voice of the American people and turned down Reagan's request for \$14 million in additional aid to the CIA-created army in Honduras.

But this administration is determined. It does not take defeat lightly and it fully intends to bring back the days when the Caribbean was an American lake, and when the Central American nations were banana republics that did what they were told to do by their uncle up north. Accordingly, on May 1 President Reagan ordered an embargo on trade with Nicaragua in the hope of "bringing pressure" on the Sandinista government to "mend their ways." The embargo will stop imports from Nicaragua and exports to it, and will end service to the U.S. of Nicaraguan ships and the Nicaraguan airline, Aeronica.

Administration spokesman Larry Speakes explained that this was a necessary act to protect the security of the United States. He gave four specific reasons for the embargo: "Continuing efforts" by Nicaragua "to subvert its neighbors," the Sandinistas' "rapid and destabilizing military build-up," their "close military and security ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union," and their "imposition of Communist totalitarian rule." Consistent with administration policy, three of the four reasons were outright lies and the fourth—about ties to the Soviet Union and Cuba—a half-truth. (A recently published report by the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies, *In Contempt of Congress*, carefully documents the administration campaign of lies and misinformation in regard to Nicaragua, as well as El Salvador and Guatemala, by contrasting public statements by administration figures with official documents and reports.)

Yet in striking contrast to the level of opposition to renewed aid to the *contras*, both in Congress and in the media, the administration's new escalation of hostility against Nicaragua seems so far to be meeting little opposition. Unfortunately, this was entirely predictable, for just like the conservatives, most liberals in public life accept the idea that the U.S. has the right to remake the world in its image.

More aid to the *contras* was voted down because of a widespread apprehension that the administration was willing, if not eager,



Time to let go and let the Third World be

to encourage a military escalation that would by design or inexorable logic involve American armed forces directly in a Central American war. This was opposed by some because popular opposition, even at this relatively early stage of hostilities, was too strong, and because the lesson they learned from Vietnam was not to fight a war without solid popular support at home.

Others opposed more aid simply because they thought a military solution was wrong. But few members of Congress, and virtually no media pundits seem to believe that former colonial nations like Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua have the right to go their own way unhindered, no matter how unpalatable that way is to those who now hold power in the United States. Even so, that's what self-determination is all about, and that's what this country is supposed to stand for.

As long as another country does not represent an unambiguous threat to our security—and Nicaragua represents no threat at all—our government has no business trying to overthrow its government. The Reagan administration tries to get around the principle by lying about the nature of the threat. Yet there are liberal Democrats, like Rep. Edward P. Boland of Massachusetts, who oppose a military solution, but who still believe that "we should not abandon those who legitimately oppose the Sandinistas," and who want to "keep the *contras* in the game" with non-military aid. In other words, Boland, and those like him in Congress, share Reagan's goal, though they fear his methods. That's why they will not oppose the embargo.

But it is the goal that is wrong, and not only wrong but ultimately unattainable. That is the real lesson of Vietnam. The United States lost that war not because of insufficient military might, but because on the one hand the American people came to understand the nature of the war and to oppose it as a violation of the principles of democracy and self-determination, while on the other the Vietnamese people were fiercely determined to end their colonial status. They could never have won the war if nearly the entire population did not support the Vietcong in this goal.

The same is true in Nicaragua, which is why the *contras* have been unable to hold any territory. They simply do not have enough popular support, even among those disenchanted with the Sandinistas. And, indeed, throughout Central America few people are unaware of the history of oppressive domination by the U.S. They would like to get it off their backs.

The world has changed with great speed in this century. We have seen the decline and collapse of all the great 19th-century empires, most notably the British, and the rise of the United States as the last great imperial power. And we have seen the spread of anti-colonial revolution throughout what is now called the Third World. Fifty years ago, before World War II and the Chinese revolution, many people on the left believed that the Soviet Union and the world Communist movement would be the great challenger of Western corporate capitalism and that the world would be bipolar. But as the nature of the Soviet polit-

ical system became clear, and as the Communist world itself began to diversify, marked most sharply by the Sino-Soviet split in the late '50s, this dream, or nightmare, was put to rest.

In fact, today few Third World revolutionary movements look to the Soviet Union as a model for their own revolutions. Certainly the Sandinistas do not. Yet the Reagan administration has revived the bipolar view of the world and is doing its best not only to sell this idea to the American people—the members of Congress seem already sold—but also to impose it on Nicaragua.

That, ultimately, is the function of the embargo. For just as with Cuba after the U.S. cut off shipments of oil in 1960, Nicaragua is now being forced to become

Reagan's trade embargo will function further to divide the world into two opposing camps by closing off Third World options.

more dependent on the Soviet Union for economic support. And no matter what the Sandinista leaders intend, this can only bring them more firmly into the Soviet sphere of influence.

As for the Soviet Union, Reagan's embargo can only give it enhanced prestige among the peoples of the world seeking independence. When their attempts to escape colonial status are being foiled by the United States, the Soviets become the only source of aid to make this possible.

This polarization, and the Cold War ideology that fuels it, threatens all people who believe in democracy because it acts to limit the options to neo-colonialism or to Soviet-style societies. It would be much better for ourselves and for the peoples of the world to let go, to recognize that the dreams of the American Century have turned into a nightmare, and that the days of our empire are as surely numbered as were those of the British empire. Britain survived and lives in peace, and so can we. And if we do let go, the Third World will have a chance really to be a third world and to find its own route to the good society.

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STT

Presumptuous

I WAS ASTOUNDED TO READ JIM SLEEPER'S piece on New York mayoral politics (ITT, March 20). Wrong in many of its perspectives, it stated incorrectly that I had stopped speaking to Jack Newfield because of his positions and writings on Carol Bellamy, whom I support for mayor.

There is no truth whatsoever to this assertion.

Because of a quite different personal misunderstanding, Jack stopped speaking to me. He knows that I have full respect for his writings and opinions, and that I expect this difference, which is not about one mayoral candidate or another, to be behind us soon.

Sleeper should not presume to imagine what is motivating other people's behavior.

Ruth W. Messinger

Member, The Council of New York City

Bird

WHILE I APPRECIATE DAVID KUSNET'S attempt to put Charlie Parker's death in perspective (ITT, April 3), he spent too much time scanning obituaries and too little time learning the context of his subject.

His article is most offensive when it cites Gregory Jacques' explanation of bebop as authoritative. Certainly bebop allowed for a greater range of improvisation, but preventing imitation by whites played nowhere near as crucial a role as revising drum techniques. Bebop abstracted the vernacular of black American music—Bird's "Now's the Time" is merely an abstraction of the famous tune "I Got Rhythm." In this manner bebop musicians reinterpreted much of the music of the day and retained much of the popularity enjoyed by jazz in the post-war era.

But bebop was an art, too! In a country that prefers a laissez-faire approach to culture, being an artist is to subject one's efforts to charges of elitism. Imagine the reception that blacks perceived as elitist received in that era! A better measure of Bird's rating on the Van Gogh scale of artistic neglect derives from a comparative study of other major black cultural figures. Upon their deaths what recognition did Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, Jimmy Blanton, Charlie Christian, Paul Lawrence Dunbar or Zora Neale Hurston receive? Their accomplishments likely went unnoticed.

Kusnet's failure to grasp the complexities of his subject becomes painfully evident when he quotes Wynton Marsalis. Even the crudest schemas of jazz history divide the music into three genres; in chronological order, they are swing, bop and free. Marsalis' music is nothing if not a calculated reaction to free jazz. His enormously high profile stems from the music he plays—bebop. His comments are egregiously self-serving.

Martin Johnson
New York

FOE

I READ WITH DISMAY YOUR RECENT ARTICLE on Friends of the Earth (ITT, April 3). I'm sorry that such a poorly informed, ill-conceived and destructive item even made it into what I had always considered a balanced newspaper for the American left.

Having had a professional relationship with FOE for two months last year (independent of the problems addressed in your article), I can offer a more balanced perspective on the issue.

(1) The article was not good journalism. I'm sorry, but it just wasn't. Its bias was fueled by sources who had an axe to grind. I will not attempt to correct the article's distorted picture of FOE, as I'm sure others will write to you.

(2) The article was destructive. It focused on personality conflicts that almost

everyone still helping the organization would prefer to forget. A press release written by those embittered few could not have been as destructive. Your article encourages a pattern on the left of choosing to defeat itself. Your paper has a much higher purpose.

(3) The article created false dichotomies. The article would have us believe that professionalism and activism are diametrically opposed, that political vision and a well-managed organization to carry out that vision are somehow incompatible. If this dichotomy does exist and cannot be overcome, as the article implies, then progressive forces are in much more serious trouble than we ever thought.

(4) The article misses the point. What really happened at FOE was not so much a disagreement on tactics. Rather, the real issue was how would FOE weather its financial crisis (in the short term) and develop a more mature organizational strategy in a reactionary political climate (for growth in the long term).

The real issue is FOE's—and the movement's evolution and the need to develop new tools and strategies. It will be useful for other organizations to consider these issues facing FOE:

- What strategy and tactics will produce the best measurable results, given FOE's limited resources?

- How can FOE find its sustainable niche while competing for resources amidst the many environmental and political organizations?

- How can they build an organization and a program capable of attracting enough popular support to counter the government's policies?

Finally, the article neglected to point out that the new executive director was unanimously and enthusiastically selected by both factions. All indications are that they've chosen an able leader and are closing ranks around him.

Robert Munson
San Francisco, Calif.

Compliment

I RECENTLY WROTE THAT DAVID MOBERG'S analysis of the AFL-CIO's "Evolution of Work" report was "predictably cynical" (ITT, Letters, April 17).

The article was cynical. But after reading his extraordinary analysis of solidarity in today's labor movement with such an accurate and optimistic conclusion, I must completely retract "predictably." I truly compliment that piece.

At one point in the article Moberg mentioned that some unions choose to stay in rather than strike, and conduct a variety of "in-plant" tactics. You'd be interested to know that in December 1984, the Industrial Union Department (IUD) sponsored a "Coordinated Campaign" seminar. We discussed the "corporate campaign" tactics involving financial leverage, shareholder activity, attacking through interlocks and publicity. But the focal point of the seminar was a Friday morning discussion of in-plant tactics. Jerry Tucker of UAW's Region 5 discussed his campaign experiences with LTV Corp., Moog Auto, Schwitzer and others.

In the same vein, the Boilermakers Union Cement Division is waging an aggressive "In-Plant Solidarity and Unity Program" for locals in the cement indus-

LETTERS

In These Times is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

try. An industry-wide effort to bust the union began in May 1984. The workers chose not to walk out. The keystone of the campaign is the In-Plant Unity Program, and in October 1984 the IUD pitched in to help expand the scope of that conflict. This campaign has been marked by a great deal of activity at all levels from the shop floors, to the boardrooms, to the halls of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Joseph B. Uehlein

Coordinator, Special Projects/Coordinated Campaign, AFL-CIO

No reply

THANKS FOR ALLOWING US/ME TO READ Mr. Gorbachov's mail—at least Alex Amerisov's part of it (ITT, March 9).

Rarely have I been so optimistic about socialism and the Soviet Union. But I would be even more optimistic should you be able to print a letter that read: "Dear Mr. Amerisov: I got the message. Sincerely, Mikhail S. Gorbachov."

Paula Myers
Los Angeles

Overdue

CONGRATULATIONS FOR YOUR COURAGEOUS, although long overdue, editorial (ITT, Jan. 15) calling for better understanding of Soviet society. When will you have a Moscow correspondent on your masthead?

Mark Mandelkern
Berkely, Calif.

Principles and tactics

THERE ARE MANY GOOD INSIGHTS IN Jeff Drumtra's analysis of organized labor's role in the tax reform debate (ITT, April 17). I think he's right when he links the unions' lack of clout in this arena to their overall weakened state. But he's off base when he blames it on an "outdated" philosophy of progressive taxation, making wealthy individuals and corporations pay more, and protecting workers' benefits. That's like saying a call for cuts in military spending is outdated, irrelevant, unimaginative.

Of course we need innovations in strategy and suppleness in tactics, but the fact that the right is framing the current debate does not mean unions should abandon basic principles in order to be *au courant*. Backing a flat tax, however "modified," would be such a break with principle. I don't think unions would serve their members—let alone the "broad public interest" Drumtra wants them to represent—by joining the muddled policy debates of a directionless Democratic Party.

Lance Compa
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers
Washington

Took the bait

YOUR ARTICLE "SOCIAL SECURITY FACES an Insecure Future" (ITT, April 10) is seriously flawed. It is confused about the facts and totally wrong about the notion that the Social Security system faces possible bankruptcy. On the latter, the flimflam of the ruling ideology is swallowed hook, line and sinker. Such statements in the article as "the financial soundness [of the Social Security] contract is uncertain" and "economic and demographic forces are now pushing the program toward imminent insolvency" are way off the beam. You would do better to examine the origins of the system and the reasons why financial integrity is only an issue when it comes to protecting the aged and not about other items in the budget—as, for example, the obscene arms expenditures.

In These Times readers would be well advised to consult the entirely different approach contained in two short articles in the February 1983 issue of *Monthly Review*. The first of these ("Social Security: The Phony Crisis") exposes the fallacies in the solvency question. The second ("The Struggle to Save Social Security") explains why the struggle over the future of Social Security is a class struggle, that the real issue is not finance but social justice.

Harry Magdoff
New York

Correction

TYPOS AND EDITORIAL CUTS MANGLED the meaning of several passages in my review of Stephen J. Whitfield's *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (ITT, April 10).

The sentence about Macdonald's days in the Socialist Workers Party should have read: "He was still [not 'silly'] enough of a dandy to take the party name 'James Joyce' and to try to convert Trotsky to Macdonaldism."

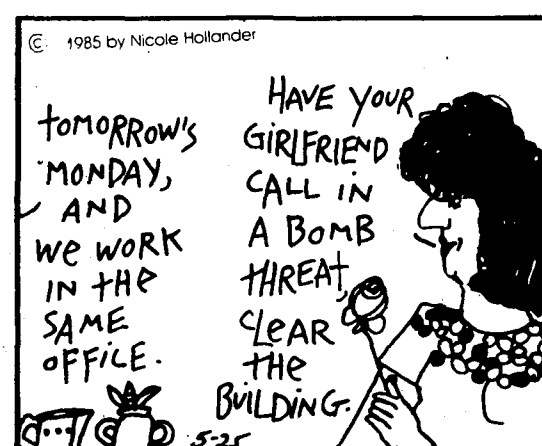
A sentence was cut from the last paragraph, blurring its point, which was that in the '60s Macdonald realized that he and other ex-radicals had been lulled during the '50s into over-estimating the benignity of the American power elite in politics, but that he never got around to revising his view of the relation between political and cultural manipulation accordingly.

And the year of Macdonald's nasty review of C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* in *Parisian Review* came out incorrectly as 1954 rather than 1952.

Donald Lazere
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



Defeat Palestinians, Israel defeats itself



By Muhammad Watad

THE TIME WHEN ARABS were afraid to meet with Israelis, to talk and to argue has passed. In the not so distant past a general boycott reigned: one was not to share a platform with an Israeli, not to debate with him, not to maintain any contact whatsoever.

This was a comfortable situation for Israeli extremists and for the representatives of official Israeli policy. However, this boycott confused and angered Israelis who sought peace and, accordingly, they grasped every opportunity to speak with Arabs—this also in order to prove that there was someone to talk to.

The devotees of the generalization "there is no one to talk to" knew during all those years that there was someone to fight with. The (Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) grew to huge proportions and fought many wars and in each of them encountered the Palestinians. But decisive victory was

Yassir Arafat's statements in 1984 forced reexamination of basic assumptions.

never achieved. Over the years the Palestinians gained a kind of immunity and the tables turned.

There are no more boycotts rooted in fear and lack of self-confidence. There is not a single leader in the West Bank, for example, who today would refuse to meet with Israelis, and this without scrutinizing their credentials.

Fifteen years ago such meetings were the patrimony of a group of "moderate" leaders, who became the focus of sharp criticism on the part of intellectuals and the young leadership. But for years now these intellectuals have ceased their denunciations and have entered the circle of meetings, seminars and dialogs. At that earlier stage the discussions between people belonging to two adversary nations were limited and tinged with a sense of shame. Their importance lay in the very fact of their existence and in the self-confidence of each of the participants in the justice of their fundamental positions.

Some argue that the initiatives of Wilner, Biton, Avnery, Peled, Kapeliuk and even Sarid and Bar-On have not led anywhere. They did not represent the government of Israel in these discussions. Yet their critics demanded achievements as if they had represented the people of Israel and its government.

Some of their partners in dialog were slain. Said Hammami, Issam Sartawi and Fahd Kawasme—each in turn knew better than his predecessor that he was risking his life by these meetings. They knew that the meetings had only moral significance.

They knew that they were dealing with political groups of only marginal influence within Israel. They knew that murderers of different kinds lurked in corners, threatening their lives should they persevere in their attempts at dialog. Despite this, they were not deterred and they paid in what was dearest to them, their lives.

The 17th Palestine National Council rewarded them with its decision to remove all restrictions from discussion with Jews and Israelis. From this point of view, the sacrifice was not in vain, even though the price for us was great. Whoever follows the discussion in Israel concerning the different signs coming from the PLO for the

continuation and even expansion of dialog with Israelis cannot but be sad and disappointed. The sorrow stems from the lack of esteem and even the contempt for the sacrifices of Hammami, Sartawi, Kawasme and their friends.

An Arab who wants to make peace with us is a dead Arab, they say, adding: we are sparing their lives by not meeting with them. I do not understand how this concern is compatible with the list of conditions they pose in every context for a possible meeting. Before we sit down with them, we pose conditions that assure the liquidation of our partners in dialog without even assuring our own participation.

Those who are really concerned with the fate of these Palestinian peacemakers should have done their utmost to prevent the attempt at destroying the Palestinian people, in the refugee camps in Lebanon and in the diaspora, both near and far. Whoever is concerned about their lives and concerned about the fate and future of Israel must act to create conditions that will assure dialog. Only then should they raise their claims and their demands. It is true that some of the conditions we pose are justified, but their place is within a framework of meetings and discussions,

Credibility requires mutual self-criticism

By Ya'acov Silber

FAHD KAWASME'S APPOINTMENT as the Palestine Liberation Organization's shadow minister for the occupied territories clearly demonstrated the tangible change in that body prior to and following the November meeting in Amman of the Palestine National Council. Kawasme's subsequent assassination by Syrian-controlled extremists offered a striking repudiation of the laconic "nothing new in the PLO" mentality—so much so that even some Labor Party politicians were compelled to re-examine basic assumptions about the official Palestinian leadership.

The changes had become apparent throughout 1984 in statements by Yassir Arafat. *The Observer* reported April 22 that Arafat called for direct talks with Israel under the umbrella of the UN, to secure "a just peace in which there will be no victor and no vanquished." *Le Nouvel Observateur* quoted Arafat May 4 as stating: "I propose direct negotiations between the Israelis and ourselves, under the aegis of the UN." Asked if he "would be for mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO?" he responded that he "would be for mutual recognition between two states." UPI reported from Peking that he repeated these statements in talks with Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang last May.

It is "logical" that adherents of the Greater Israel ideology, which precludes returning any part of the occupied territories (thereby leading to perpetual conflict) would ignore these changes in the PLO. Such people prefer Palestinian leaders who oppose negotiations with Israel and deny its right to exist: the Palestinian hardliners offer the Jewish maximalists a justification for declaring that there is "no one to talk to" among the Palestinians. Elsewhere on the Israeli political spectrum, some would be in favor of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian conflict but know that any attempt on their part to propose, much less enter into negotiations, even on the basis of the temperate Labor Party platform, would mean the end of their cherished national unity government.

It is up to the rest of us to stand up and demand that the government take advantage of the current opportunity to solve the deadlock. It is in Israel's best interests.

By the same token, the positive change manifested at the Amman meeting of the

PNC should result in serious reflection on the Arab side, too. Why did it come so belatedly? Setting aside the issues inherent to the mutual blood-letting between Jews and Palestinians prior to the Second World War, ignoring the question of how history could have saved the Palestinian Arabs from defeat and life in refugee camps had their leadership accepted the 1947-48 UN partition plan—essentially the peace formula we have come to advocate in 1984—Palestinians should ask themselves: why, 20 years after the founding of the PLO, has the Palestinian leadership only now arrived at its present conclusions? How much loss of life and intense hardship could have been prevented if they had acted differently?

In the immediate aftermath of the Six Day War, peace was still possible: Prime Minister Levi Eshkol might have been ready to "give lands for peace." Aside from this potential government openness, there was the peace proposal set forth by Moshe Sneh of *Maki* (the Israel Communist Party), in those years, which was followed shortly thereafter by a similar plan issued by *Mapam*; no response to them ever arrived.

Later, in the mid-'70s, the PLO came forward with its "secular democratic Palestinian state" formula wherein Moslems, Christians and Jews were to supposedly peacefully coexist. Since it was obvious that Israel would never consent to its own liquidation, this formula was no more than a slogan aimed at getting sympathy from the non-Jewish public. To a certain degree, this aim was achieved—without advancing any real solution.

Only in recent years has the PLO started speaking in terms of a "national state in the territories liberated from Israeli occupation." This comes close to the solution envisioned by Israeli doves.

Even then, influential elements in the PLO saw a "mini-state" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip solely as a "jumping board," a temporary nucleus toward a Palestinian state in the whole of Palestine. Perhaps such maximalism does not threaten the evolving peace, but since Arafat has not denounced this interpretation, not even his relatively moderate wing of the PLO has helped the Israeli peace forces in their struggle on behalf of mutual coexistence.

More deplorable still were the pronouncements of certain Communist parties. For instance, the Egyptian Communist Party made a distinction between

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not prior to such face-to-face meetings. I have no explanation for this situation other than the assessment that we have lost our self-confidence, our faith in the justice of our way. At one time we were not afraid of any Arab factor, including the PLO. But since we have become colonialists in occupied territories, conquerors in Lebanon, corrupt economically and distorted socially we have lost our self-confidence. We have begun to be afraid, first and foremost of the PLO, which has no army like our own, no technology like our own and no backing from a great superpower like the U.S., but that does have faith in the justice of its path and a leadership that aspires to rehabilitate itself.

The IDF will not defeat the Palestinians in the battlefield even if it pursues them to the island of Fiji. The IDF will not defeat them because they are, first and foremost, here, inside Israel, the marrow of its bones and the dust of its earth. Were it to defeat them, it would defeat itself. The time has come to see reality, to gather strength and to enter into an open dialog with those we fear, with the PLO. ■

Muhammad Wadat is a member of the left labor party, Mapam, and a member of the Knesset.

the "immediate tactical solution" of a "national Palestinian state on the territory vacated by Israel" and the "strategic solution," which must "provide for the formation of a secular democratic state on the entire territory of British-mandated Palestine...free of Zionism," i.e., "ending the immigration of Jews."

How can Israelis striving for a peaceful solution to the conflict, let alone the general Israeli public, be convinced of the good intentions of the other side if the "Information Bulletin" of the Communist parties (Prague, May 1981) publishes such theses *in extenso*, and in a context where the Soviet editor of a World Trade Union publication blatantly writes: "Since it was implanted in Palestine, the State of Israel has acted..." (*Solidarity Palestine*, March 1981). It has been forgotten that in 1947 the Soviet Union pressed for the "implantation." So long as a superpower like the Soviet Union does not explicitly and convincingly change its position, even such a reasonable slogan as that espoused recently by Arabs, calling for "negotiations under the aegis of the UN" is bound to arouse mistrust in Israel.

A first encouraging sign of sincere striving toward a peaceful solution from this camp appears in an article by Naim Ashhab, a member of the Politburo of the Palestinian Communist Party. Explaining the resolutions of the First Congress of his party, he severely criticizes "those forces who consider the creation of an independent state in the territories occupied in 1967 to be a task of the present stage, but who see the strategic, final aim as the erection of a secular Palestinian state in the entire territory of the once Mandatory-Palestine" (*Problems of Peace and Socialism*, Prague, September 1984). Ashhab is not vague about who "those forces" are, explaining that "our program contains qualitatively different aims fundamentally at variance with those of other patriotic forces operating on the Palestinian scene."

Sincere partisans of peace cannot ignore the importance of this reminder: even after 37 years of mistaken attitudes by Israel toward the Palestinian Arab people, even after seven years of Likud affronts and attacks on that people, one cannot put the entire blame on Israel.

In order to convince a population, especially one that has undergone such traumatic experiences as we have, complete intellectual sincerity is a necessity. Merely changing formulas and slogans without self-criticism and honest explanation of previous false views and deeds will not create credibility. And movements lacking credibility will not succeed. ■

Ya'acov Silber is a leader of the Citizens' Rights Party.
Reprinted from *New Outlook*, the Israeli English-language magazine, 295 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10001.

House aide looks at Nicaragua lobbying

By Michael Lewin Ross

A SMALL HILL OF PAMPHLETS, books, letters, copies of speeches, opinion polls and photographs of Nicaraguan children are heaped on my desk, where I work for a member of Congress. It is a glossy tribute to the season's most anguished lobbying effort, around the \$14 million in aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*.

Over the last few weeks, we were assaulted by an avalanche of mail and phone calls. We were offered briefings from a cast of characters ranging from President Reagan and domestic church groups to television celebrities, impoverished Central American peasants and European politicians. Every single organization swore allegiance to "peace, democracy and security" in Central America. The material presented on the Sandinistas and the *contras* were so contradictory, however, that it would be easy to think that there are two countries named Nicaragua, each with a Sandinista government and its own set of *contras*.

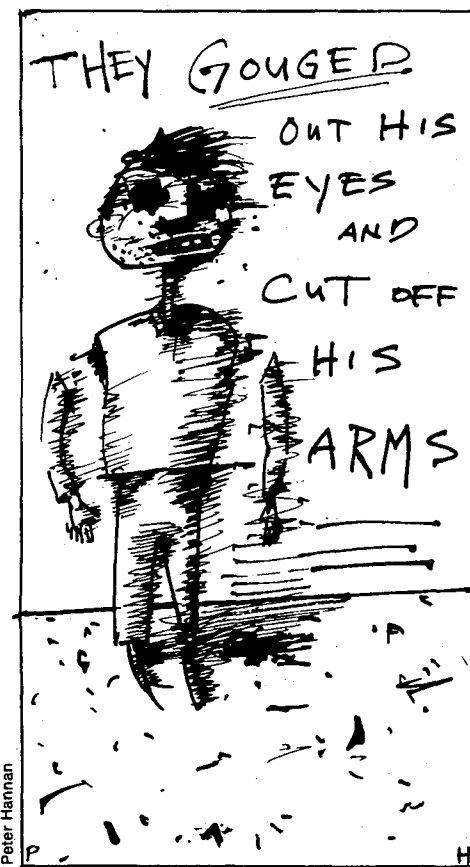
The Republican National Committee led off the propaganda war with an "official survey" containing questions such as: "Do you agree with Democrats who say that Soviet/Cuban efforts to topple pro-West governments in Central America pose no direct threat to U.S. security?" The Cuban American National Foundation donated to the effort an article entitled "Sandinistas Attract a Who's Who of Terrorists": "Scores of left-wing militants from around the world—some of them wanted on terrorism charges in their home countries—have settled in revolutionary Nicaragua...[and] are treated by the Nicaraguan government as virtual diplomats."

Although public opinion polls consistently show the U.S. public is strongly against military coercion in Central America, Citizens for Reagan reported to congressional staff that by a 38.8 percent to 32.9 percent count, those polled in a recent survey agreed that "President Reagan is on the right track with his policies in Central America."

The Coalition for Democracy in Central America bestowed upon Congress copies of their *Freedom Fighter* campus newspaper, which warns readers to keep clear of rallies sponsored by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), a "KGB-funded terrorist propaganda network." The *Freedom Fighter* is the only publication bold enough to flesh out President Reagan's comment that the Nicaraguan *contras* are the moral equivalent of our nation's Founding Fathers. "Foreigners control Nicaragua," it argues. "King [George III]'s officers who ran America in the 18th century are [like] the Soviet and Cuban consuls, *aparatchiks* and officers who run Nicaragua today. The Tories of 1775 are the Sandinistas of 1985."

The glossiest publications come from the State Department and the Pentagon, adorned with photos of Nicaraguan President Ortega meeting with Soviet-bloc leaders, and satellite pictures of Nicaraguan ports and airfields. Although the satellite photos reveal nothing of military significance, they endow the booklets with a conspiratorial sense of importance.

While the right was "exposing" the Sandinistas, the left's publications were excoriating the *contras*. Numerous human rights groups weighed in with reports on *contra* atrocities, each more visceral than the one before. For example, Witness for Peace mailed in a booklet with sections entitled "They Gouged Out His Eyes and



Cut Off His Arms" and "They Also Used Their Bayonets on Her Stomach."

Other groups were content with dismantling the administration's hyperbole, hoping the pro-*contra* arguments would collapse like Somoza when exposed to fact and reason. The Institute for Policy Studies published a booklet called "In Contempt of Congress" which does this most trenchantly, juxtaposing the administration's statements on Central America ("We do not seek the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government") with evidence to the contrary.

Church groups, led by the U.S. Catholic Conference, opposed all military aid (largely because it was military) and made perhaps the strongest plea for peace through diplomacy. While they often avoided the political arguments, they were among the few to address the economic injustices that underlie the region's political problems.

The two sides of the *contra* aid debate

mirrored each other in disturbing ways. The pro-aid faction relished the faults of the Sandinistas and amplified every Nicaraguan statement considered friendly to the Soviets and Cubans. Their discussion of the "freedom fighters" (or "democratic forces") was unobstructed by facts, dismissing reports of *contra* atrocities as "Communist disinformation." The anti-aid forces were similarly mute when Sandinista repression and atrocities were discussed. Their only recourse was to show that the *contras*, and Somoza, were worse, which they did with ease.

For the pro-*contra* groups, the debate was over who wore the white hats and who wore the black. For the anti-*contra* group, the question was only whose hat was blacker—a less appealing argument in Congress.

But both sides agreed the U.S. could—and should—make the Nicaraguan government conform to U.S. interests. Most of the debate was simply over the means of coercion: diplomatic, economic or military. Almost no one, it seemed, in that mountain of material, dared argue that Nicaragua's form of government is none of our business. The real winner of the fight over *contra* aid, once the documents settled, was the Monroe Doctrine, which emerged from the fight intact.

The debate was also constricted by specious historical analogies. On TV, former UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick compared the vote on *contra* aid to the 1938 Munich conference, arguing that a denial of aid meant capitulating to fascism. While the right occupied itself with Nazi analogies, the left preferred an analogy to Vietnam, making the *contra* vote the moral equivalent of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. The turbulent history of U.S. intervention in Latin America—in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Chile and, of course, Nicaragua itself—were largely overlooked in the assault on congressional opinion.

The spectre of "Vietnam II" seemed to stir the most potent public response. The most popular argument against *contra* aid, in short, was that intervention in Nicaragua might fail.

Nevertheless, Congress gave enough credence to Nicaragua's indigenous conditions to drag it off the East-West axis and place it on a North-South one. In the end, the *contras* weren't "American" enough, and the Sandinistas "Soviet" enough, to warrant U.S. intervention. It is a point that will have to be made again and again. ■

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Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography

By Zora Neale Hurston
The University of Illinois Press,
348 pp., \$8.95

Moses: Man of the Mountain

By Zora Neale Hurston
The University of Illinois Press,
351 pp., \$6.95

Spunk: The Selected Short**Stories of Zora Neale Hurston**

By Zora Neale Hurston
Turtle Island Press, 106 pp.,
\$8.95

By Dennis Bernstein
and Connie Blitt

AS LUCY HURSTON LAY dying, she called her daughter Zora into the room. Years later Zora Neale Hurston retold her mother's parting words in her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, published in 1934. In this largely autobiographical work, a young girl named Isis is summoned to her mother's bedside for some crucial advice.

"Member tuh git all de education you kin.... You always strain tuh be de bell cow, never be de tail uh nothin'.... And Isie, when Ahm dyin' don't you let 'em take de pillow from under mah head, and be covering up de clock and de lookin' glass.

Her mother's final request pitted Zora against friends and relatives who were insistent upon performing the traditional ceremonies accompanying death in their rural Southern black community. When the time came, Zora's father physically restrained her from interfering as the elders of the community removed the pillow from under Lucy's head in an invitation to a swift death.

"Life picked me up from the foot of Mama's bed, grief, self-despisement and all, and set my feet in strange ways," Zora Hurston recalled in her newly reissued autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road*. "That hour began my wanderings. Not so much in geography, but in time. Then not so much in time as in spirit."

Zora Neale Hurston chronicled her "wanderings" from Harlem to Haiti, in novels, short stories and plays. Her folklore collections and anthropological essays remain a primary source for the exploration and understanding of Afro-American culture. Novelist Toni Morrison has called Hurston "one of the greatest writers of our time."

Why then did Zora Hurston die in poverty as a ward of the state with most of her work out of print? Was it because a black woman dared to speak her piece and pursue life with a vigor and a curiosity that mystified admirers and detractors alike? Was it because her politics were "incorrect"? Did her revelations of working-class black culture embarrass those who sought to cultivate the image of blacks as aspiring to join, as she put it, "the nice, safe, middle class"? Could it be that confronting the issues of the day through stories of love and comradeship are not as acceptable as tales of violence and war?

It is likely a combination of all of the above that left Zora Hurston lying in an unmarked grave for 13 years until 1973 when Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple* and editor of an anthology of Hurston's work, erected a gravestone proclaiming Zora Neale Hurston a "Genius of the South."

Fortunately, there are those such as Alice Walker, folklorist

Julius Lester and poet June Jordan who have rediscovered and understood the profundity of this gifted creator and helped to turn the tide of memory. There is currently a substantial resurgence of interest in Hurston's work, and her books have gradually begun to reappear. The latest reissues, along with *Dust Tracks on the Road*, are *Moses, Man of the Mountain* and *Spunk: The Selected Short Stories of Zora Neale Hurston*.

How she began.

Much of Hurston's fiction is set in her hometown of Eatonville, Fla., where her father had been the mayor, as well as a preacher of fiery Sunday sermons. Zora's readers become well acquainted with the gatepost in front of her childhood home from which she had viewed the comings and goings of the world, and the gatherings of folks telling "big old lies" on the front porch of Joe Clark's general store.

"I know that Joe Clark's store was the heart and the spring of the town," Hurston writes in her autobiography. "Men sat around the store on boxes and benches and passed this world and the next one through their mouths. The right and the wrong, the who, when and why was passed on, and nobody doubted the conclusions."

Soon after her mother's death and her father's remarriage, Zora Neale Hurston left Eatonville following her mother's advice "to jump at de sun." "We might not land on the sun," the writer comments in *Dust Tracks*, "but at least we would get off the ground."

After working several years as a maid, and an assistant to a traveling Gilbert and Sullivan troupe, Hurston enrolled in the high school department of Morgan Academy in Baltimore. By 1918, she had entered Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she studied literature and became a member of the elite campus literary club, the Stylus.

Noted philosopher Alain Locke, then a professor at Howard and faculty sponsor of the Stylus, sent Hurston's writings to Dr. Charles Johnson, an early promoter of the Harlem Renaissance. Dr. Johnson published one of Zora Hurston's short stories, "Drenched in Light," in the December 1924 edition of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*. When funds ran dry for her schooling the following year, Hurston decided, with the encouragement of Johnson and his wife, to move to New York City and rent a small apartment in Harlem.

Zora Hurston's entrance into literary New York did not go unnoticed. Her lively personality, outlandish dress, her ability to turn a phrase and tell a good story made her the life of many a gathering. Professor Robert Hemenway of the University of Kentucky spent eight years compiling an exhaustive literary biography on Hurston and found that she left a vivid impression on everyone she met. "She was the kind of person that would come into a room and all the energy would seem to be concentrated in her presence."

In his biography Hemenway quotes a friend of Zora's, Carolyn Rich Williams, who remembered her apartment as an "open house" where students, artists and "high spirited people" would "sing together, laugh and talk and tell tall tales. They would play drums and sing old spirituals and Zora would have a harmonica."



Novelist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, writing in the '30s, '40s and '50s, celebrated the richness of Afro-American culture.

Carl Van Vechten

Our eyes are watching Zora Neale Hurston

Throughout her life, Hurston celebrated the cultural tradition that spawned her. Not long after her arrival in Harlem, she was granted a scholarship to attend Barnard College where she became a protegee of the famed anthropologist Dr. Franz Boaz. Boaz enthusiastically encouraged Hurston, Barnard's only Afro-American student at the time, to return to the South and collect Negro folklore.

As one of the few trained black anthropologists of that period, Hurston was able to gather information that others of her profession overlooked or were not privy to. Sherley Anne Williams, professor of Afro-American literature at the University of California at San Diego, cites Hurston's essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression," included in Nancy Cunard's 1934 *Negro: An Anthology*, as "an important link in tracing black features of Afro-American vernacular speech."

Why did she die in poverty with most of her work out of print?

ican vernacular speech."

Hurston writes in a section of the essay entitled "Dialect," "If we are to believe the majority of writers of Negro dialect and the burnt-cork artists, Negro speech is a weird thing, full of 'ahms' and 'Ises.' Fortunately, we don't have to believe them. We may go directly to the Negro and let him speak for himself."

Folklore gathering.

This is exactly what Zora did. Her folklore gathering expeditions, which took her from a toe-party near Eatonville to the inner sanctum of hoodoo conjurers in New Orleans and the West Indies, are described in her books *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse*. These landmark works formed an early antidote to racist theories in the social sciences, such as the notion that blacks are "culturally deprived."

Zora Hurston celebrated the richness of Afro-American culture. Her formal explorations into culture and language helped Hurston to tune and polish the black universe of her childhood.

Her stunning description of High John de Conquer is an example of this. Mythical African folk-healer and a spiritual guide through the darkest moments of slavery, High John outwitted "Old Massa" at every turn. "The

sign of this man was a laugh and his singing-symbol was a drum-beat. No parading drum-shout like soldiers out for show. It did not call to the feet for those who were fixed to hear it. It was an inside thing to live by. It was sure to be heard when and where the work was hardest, and the lot the most cruel. It helped the slaves endure. They knew that something better was coming. So they laughed in the face of things and sang, 'I'm so glad! Trouble don't last always.'"

Hurston's extensive field research through the deep South coupled with her upbringing in America's first incorporated black township, convinced her, according to Professor Hemenway, "that the black masses had triumphed over their racist environment, not by becoming white and emulating bourgeois values, not by engaging in a sophisticated program of political propaganda, but by turning inward to create the blues, the folk-tale, the spiritual, the hyperbolic lie, the ironic joke."

Hurston was steeped in these very traditions from birth. She was destined to make their unique beauty available to the larger American culture by attempting the difficult task of translating what was fundamentally an oral tradition into the written word.

Ironically, Hurston was criti-

cized by white radicals and many of her black contemporaries for writing in vernacular dialect about the "Negro farthest down." Richard Wright, whose own work epitomized the popular black protest novels of the time, reviewed Hurston's work in the Communist magazine *New Masses* in 1937. He charged that the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, now considered by many to be Hurston's masterpiece, carried "no theme, no message, no thought," and played on the black "minstral" stereotype.

While Wright's books exposed the bigotry that most blacks experienced growing up in the U.S., Hurston's reflected her own positive experience of being raised in an independent black township.

In an insightful essay about Hurston, Alice Walker underlines the importance of Hurston's early life in Eatonville. "This community affirmed her right to exist, and loved her as an expression of itself. For how many other black Americans is this true? It certainly isn't true for any I know. In her easy self-acceptance, Zora was more like an uncolonized African than her contemporary American blacks, most of whom [including Richard Wright] believed, at least during their formative years, that their blackness was something wrong with them."

Indeed, Zora Hurston's intense racial pride caused her to take many political stands that were highly controversial. In 1954 she opposed the landmark decision by the Supreme Court to desegregate the public schools.

"She may in fact have been a little bit ahead of her time," reflects Sherley Anne Williams, who wrote the forward for the 1978 edition of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. "People would say that Jim Crow was terrible, but a part of what happened as a result of integration in many instances was the destruction of black communities. This is something that most people didn't see when integration was happening."

Many anecdotes have been told about Zora Neale Hurston's self-styled politics and flamboyant manner, but those who attempt to back her into a political corner in history will miss her genius. The only way to understand Hurston was through her writings.

Spunky fiction.

In a newly compiled collection of her fiction entitled *Spunk*, Hurston confronts the major issues of today—racism and class bias—through stories of love and daily life. In "Gilded Six Bits," originally published in 1933, and perhaps her best story, Hurston demonstrates the graceful prophetic prose that would become the trademark of her novels.

The story begins with the joyous sparring of Missie Mae and her husband Joe. One evening the night shift at G and G Fertilizer knocks off early and Joe hurries home to see his wife. Upon his arrival he hears a strange scuffle in the bedroom.

"The great belt on the wheel of Time slipped and eternity stood still. By the match light he could see the man's legs fighting with his breeches in his frantic desire to get them on. He had both chance and time to kill the intruder in his helpless condition—half-in and half-out of his pants—but he was too weak to take action. The shapeless enemies of humanity that live in the hours of Time waylaid Joe. He was assaulted in his weakness. Like Sampson awa-

kening after his haircut. So he just opened his mouth and laughed."

It was stories such as "Gilded Six Bits" that attracted major publishers to Hurston's work. In 1939, Lippincott, who had published two of her previous novels, released Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain*.

Moses, just reissued, is a unique combination of anthropology, folklore and fiction. In her introduction, Hurston makes it clear that the Moses legend is told, independently of the Judeo-Christian tradition, by peoples in the West Indies, Africa and around the world. Hurston translates the story of the Exodus into the culture of the South. The Hebrews speak the dialect of Eatonville and Moses is a reluctant leader cast in a god-like role.

The Israelites were having a "real old down home Egyptian ceremony" featuring a golden calf while their mentor was atop Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. As he descended the mountain, Moses, with "flakes of light" still clinging to his face, rested for a moment with the sacred stones in his lap. "Then from far off a sound, a note made up of many sounds came up to Moses and he listened. And his ears accepted what his soul refused.... Finally he asked Joshua, 'Do I hear shouting and singing, Joshua, or is it just a ringing in my ears?'"

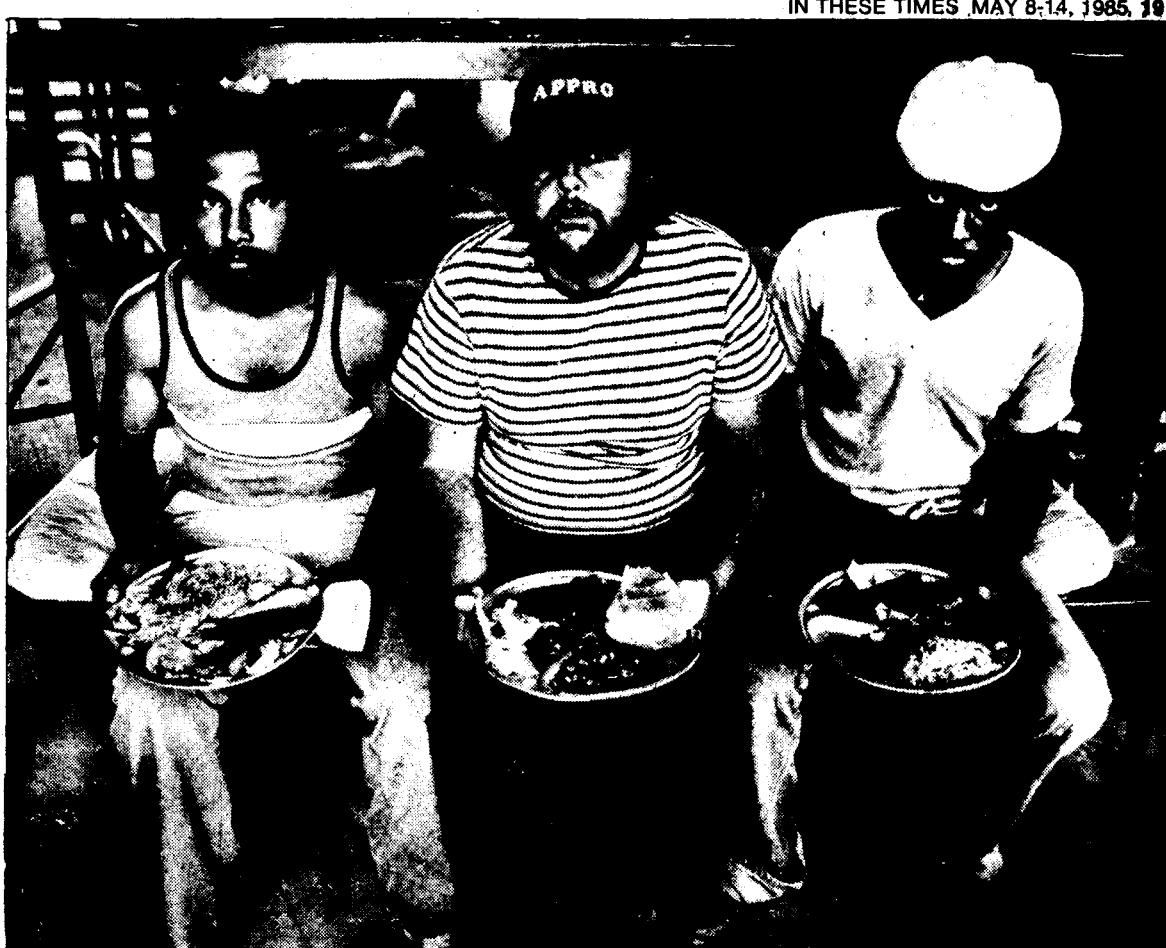
After *Moses*, Bertram Lippincott encouraged Hurston to write her autobiography, a project that she undertook with some reluctance. When *Dust Tracks on the Road* was first published in 1942, Hurston was once again accused of ignoring the brutality perpetrated by racism in the U.S. However, she was a victim of it as only a black woman could be, and her understanding of oppression penetrated to the bone. In fact, Hurston was hampered in the very writing of her autobiography by Lippincott editors who made it clear they wanted the book written in a way that would be marketable to a white, war-time audience.

Fortunately, the newest release of *Dust Tracks* contains over 50 pages of the original manuscript that had previously been censored. In the chapter entitled "Seeing the World As It Is," a fiery Zora Neale Hurston demonstrates her awareness of racism and its relationship to imperialism:

"All around me, bitter tears are being shed over the fate of Holland, Belgium, France and England. I must confess to being a little dry around the eyes. I hear people shaking with shudders at the thought of Germany collecting taxes in Holland. I have not heard a word against Holland collecting one-twelfth of poor people's wages in Asia. Hitler's crime is that he is actually doing a thing like that to his own kind."

Indeed, it was Zora Hurston's willingness to "speak truth to power," her deeply original vision and individualistic lifestyle that eventually led to her alienation from mainstream America, black and white. For three decades the brilliance of Hurston as a homespun American creator, talented folklorist and novelist was nearly forgotten. However, even after her death, Hurston remains strong and the best of her work refuses to be compromised or ignored. ■

Dennis Bernstein and Connie Blitt's essays have appeared in *Newsday*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Progressive* and *Commonweal*.



Michael Williamson

THE UNEMPLOYED

Uncovering an underclass

Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass

By Dale Maharidge

Photography by Michael Williamson

Doubleday, 192 pp., \$15.95

By John Russo

SINCE 1982, THE LABOR force in the Youngstown area has dropped by more than 20,000—roughly 10 percent. Likewise, in the Tri-State region (western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and West Virginia) more than 180,000 workers have disappeared from the labor rolls. Where have these workers and their families gone? What has been their experience since leaving the region?

Business and governmental leaders have attempted to normalize the emigration by suggesting that these workers have simply moved to greener pastures in the South and western U.S. No doubt, many have found work elsewhere; recent studies suggest that many have been re-employed in largely retail and service sectors, where wages, benefits and job advancement are limited.

Other workers have not been so fortunate and have become part of a large nomadic underclass that has not been seen since the Great

Depression. It is this group of displaced workers and their families that is the focus of *Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass*, written by Dale Maharidge with photographs by Michael Williamson.

Maharidge and Williamson are an investigative reporting team from the *Sacramento Bee*. In 1983, they began to investigate the rumor that jobless, middle-class people were seen riding the rails to California in large numbers in search of employment. After determining that these rumors were indeed accurate, they set out to study just how widespread was the phenomenon.

The book begins in Youngstown, Ohio, where Maharidge spent one month assessing the effect of the steel mill closings on the lives of workers. Talking to the unemployed, as well as to business and community leaders, what emerges is a portrait of a community in the midst of a social and economic crisis through vivid portraits of Youngstown's working-class families. It is these people whose houses are foreclosed or set ablaze, who are calling the mental health clinics in record numbers and who are forced to take welfare after generations of self-sufficiency.

In Clyde, Ohio, readers are introduced to people from West Virginia, Kentucky, Michigan and Ohio who have journeyed great distances to complete a job application. It is the second of three days in which applications are being received for 200 jobs. Four thousand applications have already been received, yet hundreds of people have braved the 30-degree night air. The voices of these people are filled with fear, resignation and anger.

In St. Louis, Maharidge interviews a small businessman (Don) who has gone bankrupt and is too proud to go on welfare. His marriage has succumbed to the pressures of unemployment and he has no place to go. The author follows

One image of today's jobless: dinnertime at a farm labor camp.

him in his attempts to find work, to sell his blood for cash and, finally, to the rescue mission to sleep among strangers more like himself than he would like to believe. Unable to find work, he decides to hop a freight to Denver where there are rumored job openings. While riding in a pick-up truck bed being carried by train, Don recounts the story of his decline, bouts of self-doubt and suicide. We see the emergence of the psychology of despair and declining expectations.

Through the Ozark Mountains, Kansas City and finally to Denver, where readers are introduced to others who, like Don, are wondering what has happened to the American dream. The people being interviewed are not hobos, rather they are desperate for work. Yet, the authors do occasionally find hobos who are helpful in describing what is happening at the margins of society. The hobos talk of the influx of "greenhorns" who are impinging on their lives and limited resources. The talk of a housing crisis among hobos and the drop in the price of plasma due to an oversupply of donors may strike many readers as a grotesque parody of economic analysis. Yet, it illustrates a fragile struggle for subsistence.

The author doubles back to St. Louis and begins to move by car from the Midwest to the Sunbelt states. As the journey continues, the people interviewed along the way become seemingly more desperate. In a tent city in Texas, a father becomes disconsolate as he describes his family's survival on nothing but potatoes. From Texas, the authors move to Mexico, Arizona and California, skirting the U.S. border with those who have been forced to the socio-economic fringe.

This is a passionate book written by someone who has observed the indignities of unemployment and needless human suffering firsthand, and whose perspectives have been altered. The book's intensity is heightened by the photographs of Michael Williamson, California's preeminent photojournalist. He has visually captured the agony, fear, hunger and anger of this new underclass. ■

John Russo is director of the Labor Studies Program at Youngstown State University in Ohio.

By Pat Aufderheide

TED TURNER'S GRAB AT CBS has put an ideological spin on the hostile corporate takeover. While his attempt may fail this time, it raises questions that will linger and be revived the next. Like Jesse Helms and Fairness in Media (FIM), the conservative coalition that triggered takeover attempts, Turner has watched the networks balefully for years. He says the networks have "failed all too often to realize the potential the medium offers to challenge, uplift and inform the public." Although he claims to have "absolutely no connection with any ideological or other group," he has met with FIM representatives, whose co-founder James Palmer Cain sees CBS as fostering a "slide toward welfare state liberalism."

Public affairs is the butt of these charges. Turner has denounced network news as "gloom and doom." White House Communications Director Pat Buchanan has proposed that, in a new regime, contentious Dan Rather might be replaced by smooth, arch-conservative Pat Robertson, host of the daily religious-oriented news show *The 700 Club*.

Most of a TV day, however, is

filled with entertainment. And while journalists debate news objectivity, soap and sitcom addicts are wondering about the future of their favorite series. "My wife would kill me if we took off *Dallas*," smiles Cain. Turner says he wouldn't change much, but only improve the "quality, objectivity and diversity of CBS programming."

But Turner has harshly criticized TV entertainment before, citing its "gratuitous and excessive reliance on sex and violence." Broadcast entertainment has been criticized on similar lines by many conservatives, as well. "Now the networks flagrantly show sex out of marriage—that destroys a society," says Richard Viguerie, publisher of *Conservative Digest* and a major fundraiser for far-right politicians.

"TV glorifies drug use, and some 90 percent of businessmen on TV are crooks or con artists or buffoons. We're going to turn to shows that don't mock or destroy our values," Viguerie promises. Those values have been described by Sen. John East as the "domestic ethic," centering on the "family, the neighborhood and local community, the church and the nation."

What would a purified prime

ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

Conservatives find a glow in TV's golden oldies

time look like? There are hints in a current trend toward marketing of reruns as family programming. Turner is proud of the ratings his superstition gets for *I Love Lucy*, and independent broadcasters have begun heavy competition for shows that have long been in the vault.

But perhaps the best clue to the look of a purified programming day comes from a longstanding rival of Turner's, Pat Robertson's own Christian Broadcasting Network. Its CBN Cable, with some 23 million potential viewers, is now the third largest ad-supported cable channel, offered free to cable companies.

CBN Cable serves, according to its president Tim Robertson (Pat's son), typical American families, "by which we mean one with a

mother, a dad and 1.8 children." He sees these families as "yearning for traditional values" in a time of spiritual reawakening, and he takes as evidence for this yearning the re-election of President Reagan. "The cable channel fits into our mission to evangelize," says programming vice-president Tom Rugeberg, and *The 700 Club* is shown four times a day. But he doesn't sell the service on its religious content, which occupies only a fraction of the round-the-clock programming.

It hasn't been easy to find family entertainment, though. CBN lacks resources to produce all its own shows, or to buy new ones. If it could, shows like *Miami Vice*, *Anything for Money*, and anything that features alien beings would be ruled out on moral grounds. So

CBN has turned to golden oldie, pre-1968 programming, and has drawn steady increases in audience with programs like *Dobbie Gillis*, *Bachelor Father* and *Flipper*. Its top draws are family series, westerns and game shows.

The soft light of nostalgia is kind to these programs. In a medium grounded in fashion and novelty, dated fashions take on the look of tradition. Some reviewers have welcomed back characters from their childhoods. "I think one reason the older programs are so popular is simply because we already know these people. They're old friends," says Rugeberg, adding a dimension to a recent comment by Reagan that television has become "our neighbor."

But a look back to the time when the shows were new raises ques-

IMAGES



They're juggling our Genesi/Dona Ann McAdams—from "Disarming Images"

Illuminating war with art, not propaganda

"Disarming Images: Art for Nuclear Disarmament" is an exhibit of works by 46 contemporary artists, including Red Grooms, Laurie Anderson, Claes Oldenburg and Keith Haring, on the theme of disarmament. Sponsored jointly by the Bread and Roses cultural project of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees and by Physicians for Social Responsibility, "Disarming Images" will tour the nation over the course of the next year (see end of article for schedule). According to organizer Nina Felshin, the project documents the way "the consciousness of the '80s is being shaped by the threat of nuclear war." Some works refer openly to nuclear explosions; some of them—all by women—focus on the threat to future generations; some address the sources and abuses of power. While some draw on images of popular culture, others use religious imagery. The common thread through the diverse metaphors and media is the attempt to confront the unimaginable with an artist's

imagination. Art, Felshin says, "can help keep alive and visible an issue that must not be allowed to dissipate into silence." "Disarming Images" is an unusual art exhibit, in that each site forums, film and video programs and performances, involving local community groups, are co-ordinated with the exhibit. The project has also generated a striking series of posters.

The exhibit opened at the New York State Museum in Albany, where reviewer Phil Sheehan attended opening day with his family.

By Phil Sheehan

FORGET THE TITLE OF THE exhibit. Disarmament is not the subject. The subject is children. Children figure prominently in the art. Children previewing the show helped develop study guides for it. And, disappointingly, some of the work is childish.

Several hundred people attend

the Albany opening on a gray Saturday afternoon. They carry or tow youngsters from a few weeks to five or six years old. Not many teenagers attend. But the very young can be interested in one new experience as easily as another. A museum is as good for them as a baseball game or a puppet show.

These young ignore a work of art masquerading as a pull toy and cluster around a small box and broken brick, the source of low pulsing musical tones that echo through the gallery. Adults don't notice the box; when asked later, most of them say they didn't hear the music either.

Five poets read from their work for the occasion, poems related to the theme of nuclear disarmament. The one woman, clear-eyed and clear-voiced, seems confident her poems can stand on their own. Most of the men read more dramatically and to less effect. One major voice, Gary Snyder, recites so gently that those in back sometimes cannot tell what the words are. But the clear words are so right that his music works, and the audience appreciates and applauds even when they really haven't heard.

When it opens, "Disarming Images" is an event. People come to stand and chat, the drink wine and nibble at cheese, to carry on the

way adults normally do in public. In such a setting, it's hard to get a clear view of the art; it's impossible to get a feeling for the whole show.

The following week, the event is over, and "Disarming Images" is just another display at the New York State Museum. Wednesday the gallery is very quiet: small groups stop by as part of the visit to the Capital; fewer come specifically to see this exhibit.

Most who see it on purpose are already convinced. They hope to find a message that will convince others. They do not find propaganda.

A guide from another part of the museum tells his companion that the show must have been put on by someone "hysterical from an acid trip." An older couple wander in, then leave, the man shaking his head. A woman from a nearby state office comes in on her coffee break, looks carefully and leaves, "more than disappointed," she says, "but less than dismayed."

The developers of the exhibit—none hysterical—say this is a first-rate collection of art. It may help provoke discussion, they say, but need not take a positive stand. Art, they argue, does not work well as propaganda. Certainly, while individual works in the show dwell on the horror of war, the show as a whole never manages to suggest what to do about it.

A few miles from the New York

State Museum is a General Electric plant. GE earns billions of dollars a year on light-bulbs, weapon guidance systems, TV sets and nuclear submarines. GE spends millions a year on propaganda, the current theme of which is: "We bring good things to life."

A few miles the other way is Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. RPI is a non-profit enterprise that converts children into military officers, nuclear engineers, computer scientists and hockey players. The current propaganda theme at RPI is: "Without risk, there can be no progress."

Already, dozens of schools plan to have students visit "Disarming Images" while it is in Albany. To help explain the exhibit to students, the museum has two sets of lesson plans. One has suggestions from a panel of educators; the other, suggestions from a group of children. The educators suggest educationally-sound, propaganda-free questions. The children get more involved.

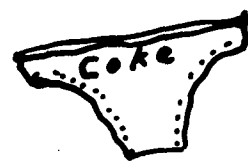
For "Maybe Babies," in which an apparently disinterested observer studies distressed babies, the educators ask: "What is the effect of the contrast between the babies and the figure in the background? Why is there a window between the babies and the man in the background? What is the effect of the repeated shapes?"

The children ask: "Do these babies seem as if they are helpless? If so, what will you do to help

CULTURE SHOCK

Drink and Dress

Coca-Cola has initiated a line of Coca-Cola Clothes, "What your body's been thirsting for."



Nonbook of the Year

Among the more improbable recent book releases is *Find Your Seasoning, Find Yourself: The Herbopsychiatric Approach to Riches, Sex, Diet and Success*. Marketed as a spoof, it sold out its first printing, to the publisher's surprise.

Art Imitates Life, Episode CXIV

Charles Bronson finally agreed to star in *Death Wish III* after the Bernhard Goetz incident convinced him that the vigilante violence ending the film is true to life.

tions about whether golden oldies make a more wholesome diet than today's TV menu does. In 1961, then-head of the Federal Communications Commission Newton Minow delivered his famous "vast wasteland" speech to broadcasters, daring them to watch their own stations for a day. "You will see a procession of game shows, violence, audience participation shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families...western bad men, western good men, private eyes, gangsters, more violence and cartoons," he said. "And, endlessly, commercials."

False families.

Adman Ernest Dichter was not surprised to find "totally unbelievable families" providing the bait for commercials he designed for cigarettes, headache tablets and stomach settlers. "There is a gap [in postwar society] between human need and the capacity of the family institution to fill that need," he said. The gap was being filled, he suggested, by endless acquisition of consumer goods. Televised "traditional families"—white and middle-class nuclear units in suburbs or idyllic small towns—may have heightened consumer anxiety, if the reservations

them? Why is someone just looking out a window at the crying babies?

This week, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute makes the headlines by winning the NCAA hockey championship. General Electric makes headlines, charged with fudging the books on government work.

This week, the president strong-arms Congress into approval of 21 more MX missiles. Well, there's hope, the optimists say: the president is using up his reserves of political capital. Another image persists, however, of a workout during which the athlete gets stronger, not weaker.

One of the opening day poets talk about humanity's arrogance in thinking we can put an end to life on earth. We cannot actually destroy the planet or the force of life he says. Do our worst tomorrow, and in 10 million years—only a few ticks of the cosmic clock—the archaeologists and anthropologists will be hard put to find significant traces of anything we were, or anything we did.

In a smaller theater immediately adjacent to the display, a lovely film called *Chronicles of Change* is being shown. It traces the cycles of birth and death and re-birth, with a message that out of all change comes new growth. It seems bitterly ironic, juxtaposed with the doomsday images of the exhibit. The irony is unintentional; the film had been shown regularly at the museum for several years before the current display arrived.

Perhaps it is not ironic, or will not seem so in another 10 million years.

Phil Sheehan is a journalist and educator in upstate New York.

"Disarming Images" will be in Albany until June 2. From June 25 to August 4, it will be at the University Art Museum at Santa Barbara, CA; Sept. 1-29, Munson-Williams-Proctor, Utica, NY; Jan. 5-Feb. 2, 1986, Fine Arts Gallery, UNLV, Las Vegas; March 2-30, Baxter Art Gallery, Cal Tech, Pasadena, CA; April 28-June 9, Yellowstone Art Center, Billings, MT; Sept. 11-Nov. 20, Bronx Museum of Arts, NY.

of actor Bill Bray are a guide. Years after he finished his last episode playing Bud in *Father Knows Best*, he publicly admitted he felt "ashamed" he had anything to do with the show. He worried that many Americans had been made to feel inadequate compared with the "totally false" family in the box in their living rooms.

TV has retailed many imaginary versions of the American family over the years—most of them absent of young children, many of them headed by single-parent men, some inhabited by hysterical women. Racially and ethnically

monochrome, TV families were cheerful pastiches of myth and stereotype. But that may be their very appeal for people who would like to return to an imaginary past. In a critique of the "pro-family movement," researcher Bob Frishman argues that if only 13 percent of American families today even roughly resemble the nuclear family of *Father Knows Best*, families of the past did not either. He notes that there were more single-parent families in 1940 than today and that marriages last longer than ever before—thanks, in part, to lengthening life

spans. Divorce is a feature of 20th-century life. The divorce rate doubled between 1900 and 1920, but has slowed down in recent years.

Traditionalist rhetoric, whether based in myth or history, does express a search for stability, an unambiguous safety zone in life's struggles. As anti-abortion activist Connought Marshner puts it, "Life is more sane and liveable if you know where you stand." And however diverse, pre-1968 TV programs did presume a consensus that sex roles were fixed and aspirations toward a suburban nuclear family general; their comedy and

drama built on that assumption.

Along with family dramas, CBN Cable thrives on shows set in the Old West—*Wagon Train* and *The Rifleman*, for instance. In fact, westerns, both in re-runs and in new series, are having a comeback. CBN's Rogeberg thinks the reason is simple: "The idea is good over evil, good fun and American history. These were the days of the good guys wearing the white hats and the bad guys wearing the black hats."

Heroes and scapegoats.

At a time when foreign policy seems to be governed by the same terms—the Oval Office boasts a motto, given to the president by his staff, reading "The buckaroo stops here"—it is interesting to recall the era in which TV westerns first flourished: the height of the Cold War. Adman Dichter explained this phenomenon, like the rise of family series, in terms that sold stomach settlers. They were, for him, a way to find scapegoats. "The orderly completion of a western," he said, "gives the viewer a feeling of security that life itself cannot offer." In his book *Tube of Plenty*, historian Erik Barnouw noted a disturbing tendency in the shows. "Problems came from the evil of other people, and were solved—the telefilms seemed to imply—by confining or killing them." Increasingly, the shows featured a violent ending, suggesting that villainy needed to be subdued physically by a strong hero.

By the 1960s, violence in TV westerns, as well as in crime and mystery series, had created a stir in Congress. When John Kennedy was assassinated, many charged that westerns had provided a dangerous model. After Martin Luther King was assassinated, an attorney warned on TV, "We're being murdered by TV, not by the guns."

To many conservatives, however, there is something reassuring about the format of the western. As Viguerie sees it, "Showing crooks getting shot on westerns is not particularly harmful. It shows that evil suffers and virtue triumphs." That vision fits nicely with conservative Paul Weyrich's view of what he calls the "anti-family movement" threat: "This really is the most significant battle of the age-old conflict between good and evil," he says.

Some old-fashioned conservatives can still remember a time when TV in itself was seen as a destroyer of family life. People for the American Way co-founder John Buchanan, a Baptist minister, recalls the effect TV had on his parishioners in the '50s. "We had regularly weekly visitations," he recalls, "and with the advent of prime-time TV, instead of being welcomed we found ourselves confronted with people watching TV, anxious for us to leave. Even my own family was glued to the TV set. I think this is one of the things that has made for the disintegration of family life."

But yesterday's tradition-destroyer is today's tradition-restorer. Designed as escapist entertainment in an earlier period of insecurity over family and social mores, TV's golden oldies are taking on a second life. Only this time they are billed, not as novelty for consumers but as family entertainment. As such, they offer a clue to what could be the look and tone of a purified network prime time.



Esteli

Continued from page 13

In early December, at the start of the coffee harvest, the *contras* began a major offensive, striking all but one of the coffee farms in the hills around the town of Matagalpa northeast of Esteli. On December 4 they carried out a brutal raid intended to terrorize the volunteers—most of them politically active students and workers from Managua and other southern cities—coming north to aid in the harvest. A truck full of young workers from Telcor, the state communications agency, travelling on an isolated road near San Juan del Norte, was attacked. Twenty-three people, including six women and a child, were killed. Most weren't shot; the *contras* set fire to the truck and burned them alive.

They made a similar attack 10 days later on the road to Limay, just east of Esteli. They stopped a bus, forced its passengers off and arbitrarily selected and killed 14 people, forcing the rest to watch. A few days later, on December 17, they struck Limay, concentrating their attack on the houses of known political activists and killing several.

On the day after Christmas, perhaps the most sickening and frightening attack—if it even makes sense to compare them—occurred near Wiwili. A group of 10 people in a pickup who were returning from a wedding celebration were ambushed, and seven, including the bride and three of her sisters, were killed. Needless to say, there are funerals almost daily in Esteli.

The FDN leaders and Reagan administration officials have repeatedly denied that the *contras* attack civilians. I think that those who believe this lie would change their minds if they could meet the people I interviewed. I want to emphasize that much of what I've described above came from no single source. The attacks on Ocotol, Esteli, the coops, the Telcor truck, the bus near Limay and the wedding party

were known to virtually everyone I met. The people of Esteli have lost neighbors and relatives in these attacks. They have seen the bodies, they have held wakes in their homes, they have attended funeral masses at the cathedral.

The assault on Limay was described to me at length by a young housewife and mother, Marina, whose cousin was killed. I learned about the murder of the people on the bus on the Limay road from Mariana, a middle-aged primary school teacher, who with her husband Rudolfo, a garage mechanic, works in a Christian base community group, travelling frequently to Limay and other villages around Esteli to conduct literacy classes and discussion of the Bible. Her report was confirmed by Father Ernesto, a priest who works in the same area.

Two Nicaraguan nurses at the Esteli hospital described treating the brutal wounds the *contras* inflicted on workers from the Mirafior coop, and their stories were confirmed by a North American nurse, Sonata Bohen, who worked as a volunteer in Esteli at the time. She told me that nothing in her experience had prepared her for the injuries she had to treat—one woman's arm had almost been severed with a machete.

Another North American volunteer, Bill Weaver, who had worked on construction projects for six months at La Quinta, described the evacuation of the coop and the destruction there and at Iziqui and Las Carbonales. What he told me was also described by Rafael and Bayardo, two brothers involved in government agricultural development work who described the destruction at Mirafior as well.

The massacre of the wedding party was confirmed by Jan van Bilsen, a Belgian television news reporter who arrived on the scene just after the attack and filmed the survivors and the bodies of the victims. After hearing the testimony of these people; the reiterated denials of Edgar Charmorro, George Shultz and Ronald Reagan are, quite simply, obscene.

The horror of what the people of Esteli

describe is so great that it's difficult to comprehend that there can be any rational purposes behind the violence. But there are—according to the people I spoke with, the *contra* strategy has several related aims. By waging a terrorist war against civilians and forcing the diversion of money, materials and labor from production and social programs to defense, the *contras* seek to disrupt the economy and to frustrate the goals of the revolution by generating popular discontent.

The effects of this plan are evident everywhere in Esteli. Because only about two-thirds of the chief cash crop, coffee, can be harvested, Nicaragua has had less revenue with which to import manufactured products from abroad. This, combined with depressed trade with the U.S., has caused prices to soar.

In the market in Esteli, using the official rate of exchange, a cheap china cup and saucer of the type you'd see at Woolworth's cost more than \$20, and a jar of cold cream sells for nearly \$60. Such inflation, of course, has given rise to an almost uncontrollable black market, with widespread hoarding and speculation, which further disrupt the economy. Shortages and high prices serve to increase the discontent of people not committed to the revolution, particularly among the middle class.

All around Esteli I saw evidence of the difficulty the government has had in continuing its ambitious plans for improving the quality of life. Along the Pan American Highway stood several half-completed construction projects, including large low-cost housing developments, a new school and a regional hospital. Lumber was in particularly short supply because of the destruction of the mill at Ocotol. Mariana and Rudolfo were struggling to find enough lumber to build an additional room on a church building to provide space for their literacy and Bible study classes. On the rural coops I visited the workers showed me new residential, storage and community buildings that couldn't be completed because of lack of lumber. And at La Quinta, the need for

housing was so severe that the men had decided to cut beams with a chain saw.

Because the fighting is limited to the north while its costs are borne by the whole nation, the war also has generated regional divisions. Like the people of Esteli, those in the south also pay high prices, have inadequate housing, schools, hospitals, and other services, and have their sons and daughters conscripted, but they haven't lived with the daily horror of the war and don't see as clearly what is at stake. Consequently, discontent with the sacrifices the war has forced the government to demand tends to be greater in the south.

For some, the frustration and fear caused by the *contra* war are demoralizing. Several people I spoke to described incidents in which militiamen about to be sent to the front had gone on drunken binges, recklessly firing their guns and endangering people. But from what I saw and heard such lack of discipline is the exception. While the people I met in Esteli expressed grief and rage over the brutal deaths of relatives and neighbors, most were determined to continue their work.

Mariana and Rudolfo were acutely aware of the risk they took in going into the countryside to teach, but they felt it was their duty as Christians committed to the revolution. Mariana told me that she has always kept in mind two close friends, Felipe and Mery Barreda, a middle-class, middle-aged couple from Esteli who founded the base community group in which she and her husband work. Felipe and Mery were working as volunteers in the coffee harvest in 1982 when they were captured by the *contras*. Although they were tortured, they refused to make statements condemning the revolution that the *contras* could use for propaganda purposes. As a result, they were murdered. Mariana refers to them as "*nuestras martires*"—our new martyrs—and says that they provided an example that gives her courage and strength.

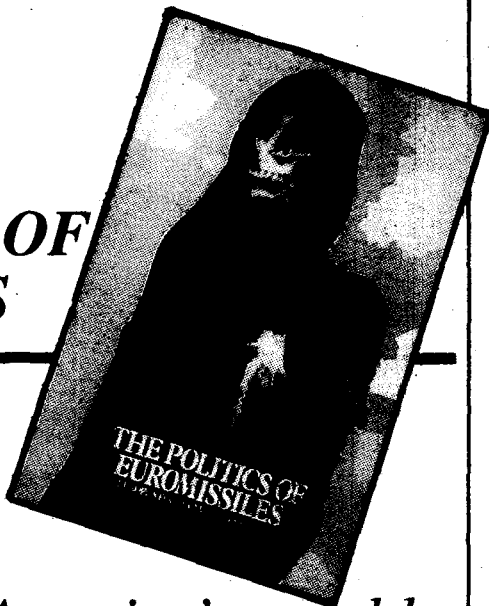
According to Ronaldo, the *contras* have adopted a new battle cry—"No podemos vencer, pero podemos matar"—we can't win, but we can kill. This seems to me to sum up their purpose perfectly. However flawed and incomplete the Nicaraguan revolution is, the *contras* clearly have nothing better to put in its place. Although many of the *contra* troops may not realize it, those who direct *contra* policy from Tegucigalpa and Miami are wealthy landowners, industrialists, bankers and ex-National Guard officers concerned to reinstitute a version of the exploitation of Somoza's time. If they can't succeed in this, then they will do everything they can to prevent a new society, with a more equal distribution of wealth, from being created. In contrast, people like Martiniano and Mariana are motivated by something quite different from this cynical self-interest. They act on the basis of a concept of social justice deeply rooted in a humane, progressive religious faith.

At the end of my stay in Esteli, I was overwhelmed by grief, not only at the pointless violence that happened every day around me, but at the fact that the people of the U.S., who could prevent the Reagan administration from supporting the *contras*, are almost daily bombarded with lies and distortions about the situation in Nicaragua. I wish they could hear the testimony of the Nicaraguan people, that they could see that the conflict is not a civil war between opposing armies, but one in which an army without substantial popular support is terrorizing civilians in order to destroy the fabric of their society.

When I spoke to Mariana, she implored me to tell people in the U.S. what is happening in her country. Her trust in the good instincts of the North American people was touching and painful in light of the readiness with which the press and the public accept Reagan's version of reality. I can only hope that those of us who have heard the testimony of ordinary Nicaraguans like her can have some effect on public opinion and government policy in our own country. ■ *Eric Patterson is an associate professor of American literature and American studies at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. He travelled in Nicaragua three times in 1984.*

IN THESE TIMES' EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT DIANA JOHNSTONE'S NEW BOOK...

THE POLITICS OF EUROMISSILES



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Music

Continued from page 24

The rest? Well, it was adept, and respectful. It had, in a nutshell, everything peripheral. All it lacked was the one thing that mattered. It lacked soul.

That's nothing that's confined to *PHC*, of course. It's common to practically all manifestations of the Folk Revival and always has been. From Schubert himself to the Klezmerim, there's a hollow space in their center. And though blacks may have coopted the word "soul," it's something no true music can lack and live. I can only think offhand of one folknik old or new who didn't travesty what she or he was intending to honor. That was Joan Baez in her early days and I'm not even quite sure why her singing worked, but it did.

Of course, these musicians—and their audiences—are caring and progressive and involved and wash behind their ears. They're nice, in a word. Which is part of their problem, because the people who made the music they are so well-meaningly travesty mostly weren't nice in the way that cares for whales and other people and the environment. Some of them were downright retrograde, in fact—the sort of people who throw crumpled empty Miller cans out of pickup trucks, and who snort derisively or, worse yet, act all kind like you do with somebody who's sick or batty, when confronted by folkniks. What they aren't, En-

vironmentalists.

I've done a bit of recording of the real, original thing in pretty remote areas. I remember one bunch of little wooden houses on a bluff behind the water on the island of Tortola. It was an idyllic setting. The sun, the sea, the palms, the good earth carpeted with soda bottle tops....

That's O.K. So is the fact that pretty much all of the finest popular styles of the 20th century were largely created by or at least played forth characters you'd be advised to steer clear of late at night, if not at any time. Calypso, the original tango, jazz, steel pan music, blues, barrelhouse, rockabilly, rap.

Rap. Now that's true folk music crafted by the downtrodden out of the oppressive

circumstances of their lives. Of course, you'd better keep a safe distance from some of their admirers. No kidding, these guys don't give a damn about whales. And if you showed them a sloop, they'd steal its battery. But what they are doing is the real thing, all right. Not that you'd know it by listening to *Prairie Home Companion*.

Still, I guess that's not fair. In about 20 years or so, ol' Garrison'll get around to it, performed by a bunch of nice, progressive, non-sexist young things—Rappers for Life, or something. Of course, they won't

IN THESE TIMES MAY 8-14, 1985 23
sound quite right, but it'll all be in a good cause.

I can just hear it: "Now looka here, suckers, we got to act/ 'coz the rain is acid and that's a fact/ if we don't do sumpn then nothin'll get done/ that's why it's up to everyone."

Bah humbug.
John Storm Roberts, author of *Black Music of Two Worlds* and producer of seven albums of international music, was for several years a producer of music documentaries for BBC radio.

CALENDAR

Use the calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$20.00 for one insertion, \$30.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

LOS ANGELES, CA

May 4 & 11

Special book sale, Left, labor, political science from the surplus collection of the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research. 10-3, 6120 S. Vermont Ave.

NEW YORK, NY

May 13

Peter Steinfelds, editor of *Commonweal*, Menachem Brinker of Hebrew University, and

Said Arjomand of the State University of New York will speak on *Religion and Politics Today*. CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd St., between 5th and 6th Avenues. Sponsored by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas (publisher of *Dissent* magazine). Admission free. Refreshments. 7:30 p.m.

MEDFORD, MA

June 3-7

Institute for Management and Community Development, Tufts University. Intensive courses in community economic development, democratic management, financial planning, housing development, decision-making, cooperative business development, marketing, computers, legal issues. For more information: Tufts University, Department of Urban and Environmental Policy, Medford, MA 02155, (617) 381-3549.

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RADIO

By John Storm Roberts

EVER SINCE WE MOVED OUT OF New York City, I've taken to listening to public radio, and in so doing, I've been hit in the eye by something that had only vaguely bothered me before: cooptation of folk music by the progressive bourgeoisie. As a life-long nut of other people's music I find this—or rather its results—a very depressing phenomenon that is symbolized by the

Prairie Home Companion (PHC).

Now, thinking uncharitable thoughts about *PHC* is a little like kicking fluffy kittens; you might be tempted but you couldn't confess to it. After all, its got everything. It's cute. It's acoustic. It celebrates Community. The fact that it's also patronizing and as phoney as that moment when President Ron leans forward confidently toward the microphone seems to escape people.

It's not the patronizing quality about *PHC* that bothers me, or the lack of

realism. What bothers me is the music. Over the last nine months I've heard exactly two pieces that took off, that had the fire any third-rate "Pahty Hahty" boombox cassette generates without even trying. There was Taj Mahal doing a picture perfect replica of "Vicksburg Blues." And there was some young Cajun group whose name I've forgotten that actually came out of the bayous and sounded like it.

Continued on page 23